

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
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Foreign Assistance Series

**DESAIX “TERRY” MYERS**

*Interviewed by: Alexander Shakow  
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| International Responsibility Research Center           | 1972-1982 |
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| USAID Africa Bureau<br>Private Sector Officer  | 1991-1992  |
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| USAID New Delhi, India<br>Deputy Mission Director  | 1994-1998  |
| USAID Jakarta, Indonesia<br>Mission Director<br>Financial crisis, Indonesian democratic elections<br>East Timor independence | 1998-2003  |
| USAID Moscow, Russian Federation<br>Mission Director   | 2003-2007  |
| National Defense University, USAID Chair<br>Industrial College of the Armed Forces,<br>Professor, National Security Studies  | 2007-2010  |
| USAID Moscow, Russian Federation<br>Acting Mission Director, short-term assignments  | 2008, 2010 |
| Retired from USAID   | 2010       |
| National Defense University, National War College<br>Professor, National Security Studies                                    | 2010-2016  |
| USAID Kabul, Afghanistan<br>Short-term consulting on employee evaluation   | 2012, 2015 |
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: We are about to begin an oral history of Terry Myers, otherwise known as Desaix. Do you pronounce the “x”?*

MYERS: Our family doesn't, but many people do.

*Q: We are at ADST on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2017. I'm Alex Shakow and we are situated at ADST offices doing this.*

*I am very pleased, Terry, that we have a chance to dig into your “nefarious” past and all that you have done in the years you've been in AID (United States Agency for International Development) and other places.*

*But I think we ought to get started really by finding out where you were born and when you were born and how did those early years affect your life and the future, to the extent that you think it did. Give us a little background before we get into thinking about development and the issues that you confronted when you reached AID.*

MYERS: We might just begin with the name, “Desaix,” an old family name, representing, I guess, ancestral delusions of grandeur. Four generations ago, a medical attaché at the Embassy in London must have read some French history and been particularly taken with French diplomacy. He named his son “Tallyrand Desaix” Myers. And Tallyrand went on to become a dentist in Frederick, Maryland. So, life may not have worked out exactly the way his father had hoped, but the name stayed in the family for a couple of generations, and I became the third Desaix. And because people can't pronounce or spell it, I usually go by Terry, for “the third.”

A war baby, I was born in 1945 in Washington, D.C where my father was working for the Navy and my Mother was raising my sister Alice, born in 1943. Dad liked to say that he sailed a green desk up and down the corridors of one of the temporary Navy buildings built by the reflecting pool down on the National Mall. We lived in Foxhall village. After the war, we moved to Dallas where Dad worked as an assistant to Tom Braniff, the chief of an early commercial airline (Braniff Airways), until he got a call from Ray Wilbur at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) just after it had been formed. One of the first development consulting companies attached to a university, they only had 13 people when Dad joined, and I guess you could say Dad's work with SRI was my introduction to economic development. I would've been three at the time. But I had no concept of—

*Q: So this would have been 1948?*

MYERS: Yes, 1948. And we were in Palo Alto for about three or four years, enough time for the arrival of my brother, Gifford. Then Dad decided he needed to become a real businessman. He had been studying the oil industry, he went to work for Richfield (Oil Corporation) in Los Angeles, and we moved to Pasadena where my parents had grown up on the same street, five doors from each other.

*Q: Childhood sweethearts?*

MYERS: No. You know, I was asking my sister, last night, how they met. We don't have any idea. The families must have known each other. But Dad was five years older. I think my mother had come back from Wellesley (College), where she'd broken her back in a toboggan accident, to recuperate in Pasadena before finishing at Scripps (College). Dad went to Stanford (University), bicycled around Europe in 1936 just as the clouds of war were forming, then walked into business school, and must have met mother on a trip home a few years before the war.

*Q: But you grew up in Pasadena.*

MYERS: In Pasadena.

*Q: Did you go to high school in Pasadena?*

MYERS: I went to a little school called Pasadena Polytechnic. It had been started by faculty from Cal Tech (California Institute of Technology) at the turn of the century who wanted a school for their kids. At the time I started, in fifth grade, it was only an elementary and junior high, but by the time I got to eighth grade, the school board had decided to launch a high school. We were part of the expansion, moving in the ninth grade into an old house and becoming the second graduating class. There were only about 40 of us.

*Q: Did you actually graduate from there?*

MYERS: I graduated from Poly. It was a good education and gave me my first chance to get overseas.

*Q: How?*

MYERS: As an AFS (American Field Service) student. I went to Germany and lived with a Dutch family (Mother German, Father Dutch) in Saarlouis, a small town near Saarbrücken on the French border—with kids who went to school in Switzerland and spoke German, Dutch, French and some English.

*Q: Was this in your junior year?*

MYERS: It was summer of my junior year and opened all sorts of possibilities, beginning with the boat ride over. 1500 of us were on a refurbished World War II troop transport, the *Seven Seas*, all going to different countries and all getting quick courses in culture, language and history of the countries we were about to invade. It was an introduction to the world. I remember being particularly impressed by a small group headed to the newly independent Uganda--the first time I'd thought about Africa.

The summer was broadening. My German AFS family vacationed in France, visiting

Paris in the middle of the Algerian crisis. The city felt under siege, soldiers with machine guns on the street corners, and papers with headlines about Algerian refugees in France. In Germany, we paused in the market place for a moment of silence to commemorate the building of the Berlin Wall in August a year earlier. We were immersed in international issues.

*Q: What year are we talking about now?*

MYERS: That would have been 1962. And after that—

*Q: In high school, did you become interested in international affairs? Or were you more the polytechnic? Did they put you in some science area? Or were you just a “normal” high school kid?*

MYERS: No, no, no. It was pretty liberal arts. We had terrific courses in history, the summer in Germany was an important introduction to international affairs, and I had a chance to begin language early. Although my French teacher, Mme. Geary, made it clear that I was a C+ language student and that’s where I’d probably stay, she still inspired us all with a love of language.

*Q: That’s why they sent you to Germany in the AFS?*

MYERS: That’s right, just like the logic of the foreign service. Well, we ended up actually speaking some French because the kids went to school in Switzerland. The post-AFS experience was important as well because we had spent talking about our experience and meeting with AFS students from a variety of countries. I remember a Congolese student staying with us for a—

*Q: What were they in Pasadena for?*

MYERS: They were going to high school. These were students who had come over with AFS to spend a year at US high schools. We had a Norwegian at Poly (Pasadena Polytechnic), for instance. The Congolese may have gone to Pasadena High School.

We were beginning to get interested in development and humanitarian assistance. I remember learning about Save the Children and raising money for our school to sponsor an orphan through Save.

*Q: So you came back from Germany, and you had good time. And then you had a final year. And then college loomed.*

MYERS: Yeah, college loomed. I visited Berkeley (University of California, Berkeley), which looked like a welcome change from the small school I’d been going to.

*Q: Was that the only place you applied to?*

MYERS: No, I had applied to Stanford and Michigan (University of Michigan and originally wanted to go to Michigan because it would get me further out of town. I visited both Stanford and Berkeley. At Stanford the tour guide told us, “You come up here. We’re going to take really good care of you.” At Berkeley we were largely ignored. After a small school like Poly, where they’d taken really good care of us, I was anxious to get to a place where they didn’t care, and we were on our own. Berkeley was pretty good in that regard.

*Q: So what were the significant events that occurred at Berkeley that were influential in your future life?*

MYERS: —Berkeley in the ‘60s! I was a history major, but unfocused. I started out in modern European history, then did some Middle Eastern history, then did some African history, and ended up thinking that I should really know more American history. I jumped all over the place.

Berkeley in the ‘60s was exciting and traumatic and confusing and energizing. We had activists on campus talking civil rights my freshman year and the Free Speech Movement my sophomore year. One of my first memories of student activism was passing Lucky’s supermarket on the way to a movie and seeing people loading up the grocery carts and leaving them in the aisles in a protest for equal pay and open hiring. The protests against the 1960 HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) hearings in San Francisco had helped establish a culture of protest, and in the early 1960s activity around civil rights was growing.

*Q: Well Berkeley was the place for it. But let’s get the years straight. You were at Berkeley from—*

MYERS: ’63 to ’67.

*Q: OK, so just before— So you were not there in 1968, that year—*

MYERS: of marches on the Oakland induction center or helicopters tear-gassing the campus in May of 1969. I missed them but got a feel for what it was like, vicariously. My roommate and lifetime friend, Dick Beahrs, was student body president 1967-68. I’d been his campaign manager the year before, in 1967, and we talked frequently after I’d graduated. 1967-68 was a particularly challenging year on campus, and he had an impossible job. I was safely 3,000 miles away in graduate school.

*Q: So were you active in the Free Speech Movement?*

MYERS: The Free Speech Movement was 1964-65, our sophomore year. I was an active observer. I was living in a fraternity up on the hill, so I was watching it from the outside. We invited some Free Speech Movement activists up to the house to speak and spent time down on Sproul Plaza in front of the administration building where Jack Weinberg had moved into the police car, and where Mario Savio got on top of a car to give his

speech urging us to throw our bodies on the gears of the machine. But I still went to classes as long as they were being held.

At the heart of the demonstrations were concerns related to civil rights and recruiting for the Freedom Rides. A number of students had supported the voter registration projects the summer before, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other groups wanted to recruit on campus. They had set up tables to recruit to go south for voter registration and for anti-Vietnam War activities. The (college) administration said, “No, you can’t have those card tables up anymore on campus. You’re going to have to move off campus.” And that’s what triggered the movement. It was a legitimate debate and exciting to be at the center of the discussion.

But in those years there was also a social movement swirling around us--Jefferson Airplane in San Francisco, Bill Graham and light shows at the Fillmore. The Diggers, a group of activists in Haight-Ashbury, was setting up free stores and giving away clothes and food to the needy. It was the beginning of drugs, sex and rock and roll, all building up to San Francisco’s summer of love in 1967.

*Q: I’m sure you never participated in those.*

MYERS: My participation was pretty tentative. I was still pretty moderate and plenty confused as well.

*Q: Had you been brought up—Was this your first exposure to what we might today describe as radical thinking and so on?*

MYERS: My life had been pretty sheltered. Poly was a small private school. And everybody was from reasonable means. I was very comfortable. Even in Germany with AFS, I had lived in a middle class family.

*Q: Well Berkeley in those days, this was not a real working-class environment. These were intellectuals.*

MYERS: We could hardly be called working class, but we did have a mix. A group of Black Panther supporters, for example, would sit regularly in one corner of the Bear’s Lair, the grill where I worked as a busboy. One of my girlfriend’s roommates was dating the minister of defense for the Black Panthers. Jerry Rubin, one of the founding fathers of the Yippies and later a member of the Chicago Seven, sat next to me in a history class. We were around some fairly outspoken people and some radical thinking.

*Q: Did any of this, do you think, influence what you ended up getting involved in? I mean, was this an important part of your political and social views?*

MYERS: It was critical, really. It challenged my thinking and assumptions about the role of government. They were tumultuous years, with Kennedy’s assassination, Civil Rights and the War in Vietnam, and they came at a pretty critical time, personally, when I was

trying to figure out my place in the world. Berkeley opened windows of possibilities.

A lot of friends were thinking about the Peace Corps. And I applied. We had the draft looming over us. Vietnam (the Vietnam War) was a huge issue. The first march against the war I went on was in April 1967 in San Francisco. We were worried about what the U.S. was doing overseas, and how we should respond to it.

And the options seemed to pose moral and existential choices as to whether we should burn draft cards or join the Reserves (U.S. Army Reserve), move to Canada, or take jobs that promised deferments, how to deal with war in protest and how to deal with the draft specifically. People were picking all different avenues.

*Q: What did you decide to do?*

MYERS: Well, I decided to go to graduate school which gave me a deferment (from military service). But graduate school in international development studies ultimately led to a deferment for “alternative service” when my draft board decided that work with USAID in East Pakistan could substitute for military service in Vietnam.

*Q: Why did you choose that?*

MYERS: Well, it was a combination of luck and inspiration and social pressures. The luck was visiting a friend from High School, Tom Fergoda, over Christmas. Tom had a Fletcher (Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University) brochure on his bookshelf. Fletcher was just starting an international development studies program with AID financing which offered a chance to work for AID overseas the summer between my two years of graduate school. Luck also came in the form of a letter of recommendation from Ray Sontag, a distinguished professor of international relations, who wrote a letter of recommendation telling Fletcher that he thought I’d make a good bureaucrat. Pretty counter-intuitive, a Berkeley bureaucrat, and something that I thought was the kiss of death at the time. But in retrospect, I came to understand what he meant.

The inspiration came, in part, from a girlfriend who was going into the Peace Corps in Kenya. I thought, “Perfect, I can just arrange to go to Kenya with AID.” It also came because, by that time, I was actually interested in development.

I’d taken a year off from Berkeley, junior year, to go to Grenoble in France. After working the summer in Paris, I went to the University of Grenoble for a course in culture, history and language. Over Easter vacation, I hitchhiked across Spain to Morocco to stay with Guido Fenzi, my uncle’s brother and a Foreign Service Officer in Rabat, and then down to Marrakesh. It was my introduction to the foreign service and development.

I can remember seeing a woman in the Marrakesh market with a baby on her back. The baby had the remains of a baguette that she’d been gnawing on. Crumbs had fallen between her face and her mother’s back and flies were all over her, her cheeks and her eyes. I remember thinking that this couldn’t be good, and that there must be something

that could be done about it. It struck me that working on these kinds of tangible problems could be interesting. So when I saw the Fletcher brochure at Tom's house, I thought the program looked good. And we also had all heard Kennedy (President John F. Kennedy)'s call for public service.

*Q: By this time, he was dead.*

MYERS: You're right, He had been assassinated in 1963, our freshman year, but the inspiration, embodied in the Peace Corps, was still strong. The Peace Corps was hugely popular at Berkeley. As we considered how best to wrestle with the draft, Peace Corps provided a chance for national service without having to participate in the war in Vietnam.

Protest against the war and promoting civil rights dominated discussions on campus. Much of my senior year was spent on the edge of campus politics, on an inter-fraternity council committee with Dick Beahrs, arranging first a Civil Rights Speaking Series and then a Senatorial Speaking Series focused largely on the Vietnam War. Berkeley was an easy draw for speakers, and we were able to attract a number—Martin Luther King, John Doar, (the first head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division), Stokely Carmichael, James Meredith, and Senators Chuck Percy, Mark Hatfield, Jacob Javits, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy.

One of the most remarkable experiences was Martin Luther King's visit. Dick and I had gone to San Francisco's Macedonian Baptist Church to hear Martin Luther King preach. After his sermon, we met him at brunch with the congregation in the basement and invited him to speak on campus. He agreed, and a few months later I drove a carload of us—including a reporter from the Daily Cal (Karlyn Barker who later worked for the Washington Post) and my then girlfriend acting as guide to the streets of San Francisco-- to pick him up with an aide at his hotel and drove him back across the Bay. He spoke, unprotected, from Sproul Steps at the center of campus, surrounded by thousands of students. Almost 50 years later, an intrepid reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle discovered pictures of the speech in a dusty newsroom file and wrote an article about it.

It was good to see the article. Memory is tricky. Facts recede; feelings rise. I can remember our ride back from San Francisco, but not exactly what Reverend King talked about in the car. My feeling is that he talked in person as he did in his speeches, with long, eloquent and cadenced answers to the questions Karlyn posed. But my main memory is of my concern about getting lost with our key speaker on the way to the Bay Bridge. And I couldn't even remember where I had been during his speech until I found myself in the second picture in the Chronicle's article, standing about two yards behind him. Fortunately, a number of quotes on the wall at the Martin Luther King monument by the tidal basin were taken from the speech and can serve as reminders.

What strikes me now is how different things were. It was a different era. No security. No entourage. In fact, few of the speakers came with an entourage. I picked up Gene McCarthy, traveling alone, at the airport and drove him back to Berkeley in my 1954

Ford with a glove compartment that fell open on his knees every time I braked. We talked about the Minnesota Farm-Labor Party and the Vietnam War, but I don't remember his mentioning that he was planning to challenge Lyndon Johnson in the primaries the following year. We had Republicans and Democrats, radicals and moderates, without worrying intensely about major security problems.

*Q: But you decided not to go into the Peace Corps, despite your girlfriend—*

MYERS: I decided I could postpone it for two years and go to Fletcher. But I was sort of a Peace Corps groupie anyway. The Kenya group had their training in New York, and I would go down every weekend from Boston. I got to know the volunteers, and by the time I arrived in Kenya, they were scattered all over the country in places I could visit.

And AID found a role for me. Fortunately, Grace Langley took an interest. She was a wonderful community development specialist from Minnesota who had worked with the Farm-Labor Party and Hubert Humphrey. She was now helping the Community Development Department with three pilot projects in Western Kenya. A contractor was in the process of evaluating them, and Grace suggested that I participate in the evaluation.

So, I got a Peace Corps motorcycle, a helmet and leather jacket from one of the volunteers, and rode off to three different spots in Western Kenya to ask village elders how they liked their community development project. The research consisted of our sitting down and having tea and my asking what they'd done with the money and how they liked the program. They'd all gotten \$5,000. They'd all built whatever they wanted—cattle dips, nurseries, clinics, community centers. And they'd liked the aid very much, thank you.

*Q: So this was the beginning of household surveys?*

MYERS: At least for me--it was my introduction to surveys, survey techniques, and interviewing.

*Q: Did you write it down?*

MYERS: Yes. It became the core of a long paper on political development for my master's thesis at Fletcher.

*Q: Did AID like it?*

MYERS: They published it, but may have not liked all of it. There was one part that mentioned irrigation equipment—pipes and pumps and other things—still in a warehouse after a year and a half, unused and something of a white elephant, and one AID official commented, "This is typical. This is what always happens with our projects." They recognized their failings, but in terms of learning from the pilot, I probably learned a lot more than AID did—about the importance of local ownership and participation in planning, design, and decision-making.

*Q: And that was during your first and second years of graduate school?*

MYERS: It was between my first and second year and gave me a sense of what work in development could be like and a broadened worldview. A great friend from Fletcher, Roger Sullivan, who later went on to a career with the World Bank, had gone to Ethiopia for the summer with USAID in Addis. After he finished up, he came to Kenya and joined Tony Barclay, a Peace Corps Volunteer at the time, later the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Development Alternatives (DAI), Jervis Lockwood, another PCV, and me on a camping trip through the Serengeti and Ngorongoro.

At the end of the camping trip, Roger and I looked at our tickets back to Fletcher. We could either fly directly back to Boston or, for \$180 dollars more, could go all the way around the world. So we went to India, Nepal, Thailand and Cambodia, to Angkor Wat, and on to Hong Kong before arriving back at Fletcher, three weeks late for registration. Fletcher threatened to kick us out, but later agreed that we could stay but only take three courses the first semester. As a result, I didn't graduate on time in June, but had to stay on to take an additional course at the end of the year. The forced delay actually worked out well, showing once again how much luck there is in life, because by that time, I knew I was going to Pakistan in AID. Staying after graduation to write a paper on basic democracies and local government in Pakistan not only gave me useful background for my first post, but time to prepare for Ph.D. orals which I hadn't been considering. Passing the orals set me up for a lengthy but sporadic quest for a Ph.D. which ultimately led to a Ph.D. in 1981, and a chance, years later, to teach at the National War College.

*Q: So spell out for me a little more clearly how the AID connection developed. I mean, I know that as part of the Tufts thing, the Fletcher School, you had the summer arrangement. But did AID also—*

MYERS: No. There was no guarantee of follow-on work or direct connection between a degree at Fletcher and a job with USAID. USAID's arrangement with the graduate schools—and I think there were similar arrangements with Woodrow Wilson (Princeton University Woodrow Wilson School of Public International Affairs) and SAIS (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies)—was to encourage interest in careers in international development. The field of development was new. Countries across Africa and Asia had only recently become independent. USAID was still a relatively new agency, and development was just emerging as an academic discipline. The program offered a very useful relationship. It took graduate students interested in international affairs, focused them on economic and political development, gave them practical experience during the summer, and made them prospects for future AID employment. In fact, five of 11 people in the program at Fletcher ended up joining USAID with me in 1969; several others went on to the World Bank or development consulting. It was the kind of investment I hope USAID or some successor organization can make again when the U.S. renews our commitment to development as a key objective of national policy. We could do something similar as a way to build a talent bank for staffing hard-to-fill posts in critical countries. When we've been hard pressed to fill jobs

in places like Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan, it would have been helpful to be able to recruit former Peace Corps Volunteers or NGO interns, support them with graduate studies in exchange for a commitment to follow-on work in tough-to-recruit assignments.

But the way we, in those days, eventually joined USAID was not direct. Eventually, we had to go through a management intern process. I, at least, had to take the management intern test. And—

*Q: Which was a government-wide—*

MYERS: —which was government-wide. US agencies would review the results and decide whom they might like to recruit. I had a choice between Labor (US. Department of Labor) and HEW (Health, Education and Welfare) or USAID. By that time, I had already failed the Foreign Service orals. I think I may have taken them in conjunction with a trip to Washington to march against the war in Vietnam. It was the fall of the Moratorium's monthly marches against the war, and I think my attitude was not particularly good. Plus the fact that I had no idea how the electoral system worked. The examiners had asked me to explain the electoral system, and I did a terrible job of disguising my ignorance.

*Q: The U.S. electoral system?*

MYERS: The US electoral system. I'm still trying to figure it out.

*Q: You're not alone.*

MYERS: But I think it was one of those questions the oral examiners threw out to examinees to see how they respond when they don't know the answer. It did teach me a lesson: Don't try to obfuscate when you really don't have a clue about what you're talking about.

*Q: So you've been a straight talker since?*

MYERS: Well, no. But I always regret it when I'm not.

*Q: OK, but still, so what happened? You became a management intern. You had taken the Foreign Service exam, but you didn't need the Foreign Service—.*

MYERS: No. That took the Foreign Service off the plate as a possibility. So I was quite grateful when AID gave me an expression of interest.

*Q: Had you gone through a series of interviews with AID?*

MYERS: I only remember the government-wide, management intern test. We spent a day as a group, doing exercises, prioritizing memos in an in-box exercise, working problems while observers judged our ability to work as a team or as individuals on the team. That

created a pool of potential interns for any government agency looking for new hires.

*Q: So you went in as a management intern—?*

MYERS: —as a management intern. When I got into AID, they called us international development interns—IDIs. So I came joined as part of an IDI class of 41.

*Q: And that was 19—*

MYERS: That was 1969. It was an interesting class. Peace Corps had played a big role in preparing us. Out of the class, 17 were former Volunteers. Five came from Fletcher, and five had worked in USAID before. And of the 41, a number ended up staying for full careers in USAID.

*Q: Who were they?*

MYERS: Dick Cobb, John Sanbrailo, Doug Tinsler, Nancy Tumavick. Bob Rucker, Christina Shoux, Steve Singer, Glenn Slocum, and Jim Graham. Many ended up as Mission Directors.

*Q: That's very impressive.*

MYERS: It was a terrific class. We began six months of Washington training with an introduction to AID documentation at in the Thomas Circle annex. We then moved on to assignments in the main State Department Building where AID had most of its offices, and then were handed over to the legend of HR, Jerry Jordan, who managed our personnel assignments.

*Q: First of all, this program at Tufts was really supported by AID. This is not a Ford Foundation-provided—?*

MYERS: No, it was supported by AID. The Fletcher Program had USAID funding and a curriculum of courses related to development. USAID agreed to take students as summer interns as part of the program. At the same time there was a national defense language program funding for graduate students, and some of us had tuition support from the Defense Department. Building a capacity to do international development was seen as being in the national interest.

*Q: It was an investment by the government in foreign affairs, international affairs, and—*

MYERS: And in development because development was such a new field.

*Q: And this transition into AID sounds as though it was fairly simple and easy? It was not a big bureaucratic procedure to get in, in those days*

MYERS: Well, they knew some of us because we'd had short-term work with AID, and

they had a big need. The demand for Vietnam was huge, and a bunch of our class—nearly half--was slated for Vietnam. At that point, half of AID was already in Vietnam. There were 15,000 people in the agency as a whole in 1969, and 7,500 in Vietnam.

*Q: And where—So you said earlier: Pakistan. So you're there as a management intern. After giving you tutelage on AID bureaucratic procedures, they sent you to Pakistan?*

MYERS: To East Pakistan. But you know, let's go back to the training a moment because I think it hits at something we're missing. You're really interested in the history of AID. We really got none of the history of AID as part of that training. It would be useful in—would've been useful for us—to be steeped a bit more in AID "lore".

*Q: And this was 1969, so you're not talking just about AID "lore" but—*

MYERS: Probably should have said "development lore." We could've gone back. We could've talked about ICA (International Cooperation Administration), Point Four, the Marshall Plan. But it's part of the idea of professionalizing AID.

*Q: Why would that have been interesting to you?*

MYERS: I think it would've been inspirational and informative, and we should be doing it today. We should be trying to create a professional class of people who know something about the theory of development, approaches, and institutions. It'd be nice to know how theories and approaches to assistance have been debated and changed over the years. The history of the Marshall Plan, Point Four, ICA, the role of the universities, particularly the land-grant schools, participant training, the early cooperating agencies, NGOs and the birth of development consulting firms.

*Q: And you got none of that?*

MYERS: I don't remember any of it. Just like today, it'd be nice for new hires to know now how DFID (United Kingdom Department for International Development) has behaved, the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) worked, theories of development and how other governments, agencies and organizations have approached implementation of programs. We got some of that at Fletcher. But we could've gotten it as an entering class, and it should be available to all who join the Agency. It should be part of our developing a professional culture.

*Q: How much, as a class, when you joined AID, I mean these were management interns. But was there a training period?*

MYERS: The full program, before being posted overseas, was six months as interns in Washington, then two years overseas to tenure. I think we had about six weeks, as I remember, at Thomas Circle, when we were doing the personnel stuff, learning about project design and the documentation and evaluation and AID requirements. And then we were assigned to our respective country desks and had a chance to rotate with

apprenticeships in other offices. That was very helpful.

*Q: Did you rotate into various other offices?*

MYERS: I was on the Pakistan Desk for most of the time with T. Swayze (Townsend S. Swayze) the desk officer. T did a good job of explaining our programs and including me in the work of the office. He took me to interagency meetings. He let me participate on real issues. I remember his sending me to Rudd Poats, then Deputy Administrator, to do battle over a memo about a shipment of PL480 wheat to Pakistan. The experience introduced me to the joys of combat within the bureaucracy, the possibility of challenging authority and the thrill of winning. I noticed a typo in the memo and argued successfully to get it revised ultimately giving Pakistan an extra ten thousand tons of wheat. T then let me go work for Charlie Paolillo and Al Furman in Congressional Liaison and Legislative Presentation for several weeks. They assigned me to visit various AID offices, collect and assemble briefing papers. It gave me an overview of key issues occupying Congress, an introduction to regional programs, Congressional oversight, and the Agency's relationship with the Hill.

*Q: And that you said was for roughly six months, before you went overseas?*

MYERS: About six months. Before I went overseas.

*Q: And you were still unmarried at this stage?*

MYERS: Oh, yes.

*Q: Still pining for your girlfriend who had deserted you in Kenya?*

MYERS: Well, by that time, thanks to a fellow in my IDI class, I met a charming woman working for the Department of Agriculture, and after a whirlwind campaign, she decided to come to Dacca. But that's another long story.

*Q: All right, so you're off to East Pakistan. Explain a little bit for the neophytes as to what was going in Pakistan on at that point, because the world was different than today.*

MYERS: Well, at the time, Pakistan included East Pakistan, formed from the eastern part of Bengal state at the time of India's partition in 1948. At partition, Pakistan included five provinces, four in the west and one in the east, the two sides separated by more than 1,000 miles across India, a hostile state against which Pakistan had already fought two wars. East Pakistan, with more than half of Pakistan's 200 million people, was by far the largest in terms of its population; its population was mostly Bengali and 90 percent Muslim.

Relations between East and West Pakistan were already frayed. Pakistan had tried to unify the country by instituting Urdu as the national language, leading to riots in the 1950s. Bengalis feel strongly about their language, culture and history. Culturally, they

were closer to the Hindus in India's West Bengal than they were to the Urdu speakers in West Pakistan. Integration was difficult. Cultural, language and historic differences were exacerbated by economics. Pakistan gained foreign exchange earnings from East Pakistan's jute exports. Bengalis felt exploited. Urdu-speakers living in East Pakistan, many of whom had come from Bihar at the time of partition, had taken over many of the management positions in the jute mills and dominated in business. They'd also been favored in government jobs, particularly as railway workers and in sections of the civil service. Many Bengalis saw themselves as living in a country under colonial occupation and resented Pakistan's role.

*Q: And what was AID doing in these provinces? What were you doing?*

MYERS: We had a big program, which included a main, head mission in the new capital in Islamabad and provincial missions in Karachi, Lahore, and Dacca (now Dhaka) All under Joe (Joseph C.) Wheeler as the mission director.

The provincial mission in East Pakistan had probably 50 people and a budget, I don't know, maybe \$20 million or \$30 million. It was a pretty big mission at the time. And we had an agriculture division, a family planning division, and a program office.

I was an assistant program officer working for Lawrence Ervin, who had been in the Peace Corps in East Pakistan with my cousin, and was the acting program officer. And then Bob Simpson came in when Lawrence left. I was delighted to see Bob because he had advised some of us interns in Washington on how we should behave in our anti-war protests. We actually had a small group of Foreign Service Officers against the war. And we had organized a candlelight march of Foreign Service Officers against the war around the State Department building. It didn't have much impact, but we did get Bob to come down to the cafeteria and counsel us, and Princeton Lyman who was—

*Q: What was their counsel?*

MYERS: You know, I don't remember exactly. But they probably offered empathy. I think they were empathetic; they made us feel heard, but counseled us not to go too far.

*Q: Just hang in there, and—*

MYERS: It was sort of the T. Swayze approach. T, when he would lean back in his chair, his coat would fall open, and you could see his "Foreign Service Officers Against the War" button on the inside of his blazer. So letting people know his feelings without flaunting them, I think was—

*Q: Good practice for what was then to happen in East Pakistan.*

MYERS: Well, probably. We may have gone a little overboard.

*Q: I doubt it.*

MYERS: According to some people.

Eric Griffel was our provincial mission director. He was (and remains) a remarkably creative and independent thinker. One of his first assignments for me was a stint in an un-air conditioned government office in the Ministry of Basic Democracies and Local Government, working directly with the Minister. I was charged with following up on work done by an earlier intern reviewing Thana Irrigation Plans developed by local governments. I got to see first-hand how the bureaucracy worked, complete with government papers attached by straight pins instead of paper clips, tucked folders with red ribbons. The colonial administrative structure lived on.

It also introduced me to the work of Dick Patton, an imaginative technical advisor from Norman, Oklahoma, who was advising the Bengalis on local government and whom I later got to know as a Harvard Advisor in Indonesia working on a microfinance approach that revolutionized rural credit and savings in the country. I'd recommend that any new USAID employee work inside a Ministry for a while to get a better idea of our counterparts' perspective.

Once I finished up in the Ministry, I started out rotations to various divisions in USAID. I worked in family planning for a while, with Jake Harshbarger. Reimert Ravenholt was the head of population in Washington for AID at the time; the area was new, exciting, and the population program in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh has turned out to have had a major impact on both maternal and child health and on population growth. There wasn't the political concern about family planning then, even in a largely Muslim country, which developed later. I also worked on agriculture, and particularly with the University in Mymensingh, where we had an institutional linkage with Michigan State (University), a worthy example of one of USAID's great successes, linking US land grant institutions with agriculture universities in developing countries to promote research, education and extension and provide the support structure for the green revolution. A number of Michigan professors came to Mymensingh to join the faculty, Mymensingh students went to the U.S. for graduate degrees. It was an approach we used repeatedly in India, Pakistan, and Indonesia with great success.

I also spent time on a number of small projects—appropriate technology for housing construction with CARE, microfinance and rural credit—relating to rural development and gradually began to spend time in Comilla with the rural development academy there.

*Q: The famous Comilla.*

MYERS: And the famous Comilla, where the then Pakistan, now Bangladesh, Academy for Rural Development, was doing extensive research and training for village-level planning and management, and experimenting with credit, irrigation, roads and approaches to integrated rural development.. And Eric gave me a chance to go down—

*Q: This is Eric Griffel, was the—?*

MYERS: Eric Griffel, our provincial mission director, a man with plenty of experience, creativity, erudition, and opinions. In addition to intelligence and good humor, he was fiercely independent, as he showed later. A great mentor, Eric had come up with the original idea to put me in the Basic Democracy and Local Government Ministry as an initiation to East Pakistan. He also made me the mission's sort of liaison and tour guide to the Academy for Rural Development. We had numerous visitors to take on tour, and Comilla, with its charismatic leader, Akhtar Hameed Khan, was a regular field visit. And every time a visitor came, it meant a four-five-hour trip down bad roads and long delays waiting for slow ferries across wide rivers. The trip itself was an education—with four rivers to cross and long waits for ferries, there was plenty of time to talk, watch tattered sail boats wafting through the paddy fields, and observe fellow passengers. Dave Mathiesen, later a deputy director at GAO, Curt Farrar, then deputy assistant administrator for Near East and Asia, John Hannah, USAID's administrator, and Maury Williams, his deputy, were among the visitors. So it was a good introduction to USAID's senior leadership.

*Q: I'm going to pull you back. You talked about earlier when you first went to Morocco, and you saw this poor woman and the child and the flies and all the rest. Going to Dhaka was the first time you'd really been living in a poor, developing country. Did you find this—I mean, you had been traveling as part of your post-Kenya stay, but did you find that being in Bangladesh—I mean, I'm sorry—being in East Pakistan was a moving, shocking situation for you to see the poverty, or not?*

MYERS: Occasionally, shocking, but by that time I'd had the time in Kenya, and I'd had the trip back from Kenya, in which we'd gone through India, Nepal, and Cambodia. By then, I had a chance to see a bit more underdevelopment.

But you're right, there were people in East Pakistan as deprived as any you'd see anywhere in the world. Disease was bad and evident. There was leprosy, and there was syphilis, and there was a depth of poverty I'd never seen anywhere—begging, deformed, disabled, and desperate. And there were people, whole families, living in abandoned, concrete culverts and makeshift shanties of canvas, CI sheeting, and mud.

And then there was backbreaking manual labor, often by women. I can remember women sitting on piles of bricks, breaking the bricks to make gravel for roads, or carrying head loads of bricks. Because much of Bangladesh is silt, really—a delta of sand bars or “silt bars,” most within 15 feet of sea level, rocks and gravel are difficult to come by. The Bengalis would bake bricks and then break them into gravel. Women were doing the heavy lifting, carrying bricks on their heads, dumping them into piles, and then sitting on the piles, breaking them with a hammer to turn them into gravel.

It was, all in all, a comprehensive introduction to the challenges of development—natural and man-made disasters, the hopes and dangers of political transition from autocratic military regimes to democracy, bureaucracies, corruption, the role of geopolitics, income inequality, and class, ethnic, racial and religious conflict. East Pakistan had it all—it

captured the major themes of underdevelopment.

*Q: Were you caught in floods during the time you were there?*

MYERS: We were caught—we had floods. During monsoon season, they were sometimes big enough in Dacca to keep us from going to work, and in 1970, the Bhola cyclone and tidal wave swept out of the Bay of Bengal and did enormous damage.

I mentioned that I worked on agriculture and family planning, and then on integrated rural development, and with the Academy at Comilla on local planning, credit and irrigation. In addition, I worked on flood mitigation. We were developing a program with the World Bank to restore and extend massive embankments (polders) to prevent salinization along the Bay of Bengal. Eric asked me to join a Bank team on an inspection of coastal embankments along the Bay with a number of people you might have known from the Bank--Bob Picciotto ...

*Q: Oh, Bob Picciotto, sure.*

MYERS: And Risto Harma, a Finnish economist, Bill Dugan, an engineer, and a couple of others and I went down to look at the embankments. We just happened to be there at the time of the 1970 Bhola Cyclone (November 12-13). The cyclone and tidal wave killed anywhere from 250-500,000 people overnight.

We spent the night in a cyclone shelter on the second floor. The water in our area rose about 15 feet, breaching the embankments, flooding the first floor of our building and carrying our boats two miles from where they had been moored.

*Q: Was this at Dhaka or Comilla?*

MYERS: This was in Patuakhali, down on the coast. We had taken what was called “The Rocket,” a 1930 paddle wheeler, down from Barisal to Patuakhali. We were inspecting the embankments. Next thing we knew, this cyclone was approaching. We were following it on our radios. There were six or seven of us in our party, most in their 40s or above and with families. Several were writing their wills as we waited for the—

*Q: Oh, my gosh.*

MYERS: And one other guy and I were running out to the embankment periodically to see how fast the tide was rising up the embankment. It was coming up noticeably, the wind was howling, and the tops of palm trees, increasingly horizontal, nearly touched the ground. It was really blowing.

*Q: Did the World Bank project that you were associated with work? Did they ever get that built?*

MYERS: They did. The Bangladesh Government, with the World Bank and other donor

assistance, has spent billions of dollars in the coastal zone on polders, cyclone shelters, and efforts to counter salinization and control flooding. It is a continuing challenge because so much of Bangladesh is little more than a silt delta created by the confluence of the Padma (River) and the Meghna (River), capturing the Ganges (River) and the Brahmaputra (River) and entering into the Bay of Bengal —

*Q: So they're all—*

MYERS: They all flow down together from the Himalayas bringing silt and an enormous force of water. And they meet the Bay of Bengal which is prone to major storms that often come in the form of cyclones and accompanying tidal surges.

A couple of times I got to see the power of the storms and the river flow first hand. The first was during the cyclone. The second was after the cyclone and tidal wave when we began a relief effort. One of my jobs was to visit cyclone-affected areas to check on rice supplies and find out what was going on. One time, anchored offshore waiting to dock, I watched as the edge of an island peeled off and fell into the water a foot at a time under a heavy rain. A poor Bengali was harvesting his rice as fast as he could before his field caved into the water; another farmer was dismantling his house before it disappeared. When I commented to the Bengali next to me that this was extraordinary, he said, “You should have been here last week. You would’ve seen the Port Authority building fall in.”

**0:47**

And then he said, “You know, but as the silt is caving in on this side, it’s building up on the other side of the island. It’s got to go somewhere.”

*Q: You talked about getting into integrated rural development. And over the years, integrated rural development saw its great peak, and then there was a lot of skepticism about it, and so on. Do you have, with the benefit of hindsight now, some sense as to what worked and what did not in the integrated rural development work that you were involved in? What did you learn about this?*

MYERS: Well, I think that faith in integrated rural development, like central planning, probably grows out of the hope that with good theory, planning and coordination, we can pull it all together. We’re generally disappointed when it doesn’t work out as envisioned.

Development is complex. There are so many factors. We try to get all these factors coordinated and organized in order to have the greatest impact. When we’re not able to do that, we think we’ve failed. Integrated rural development is helpful as a theoretical organizing principal, but proves impossible to implement as planned. Life gets in the way. But the theories and concepts can help shape our thinking and identify priorities. Things that seem to work best are the ones driven by self-interest.

*Q: Self-interest by, on the part of the—*

MYERS: The suppliers or beneficiaries. Somehow, what starts as a project becomes self-sustaining because those involved get enough quickly enough to continue to support the

effort. They can see the benefits. Others can see the benefits. A momentum builds. It makes a case for judicious prioritizing and trying to build in some early wins.

I think that savings and credit programs have consistently shown the possibility of becoming self-sustaining and providing a spine for rural development, agriculture and off-farm employment. We supported programs in Indonesia, particularly, in Senegal and even in Russia in which credit programs became institutionalized.

Small business development is difficult. John Mellor (former chief economist, USAID and founder of the International Food Policy Research Institute) has spent a lifetime trying to help us figure out how to encourage off-farm employment. But technical assistance and training are usually not enough. You need a reasonable policy environment and institutions that can intermediate finance, take savings and provide credit.

New technologies can be self-sustaining, and technical assistance can introduce sustainable ideas and approaches. We've sought a number of holy grails in rural development—the perfect cook stove, approaches to water harvesting and irrigation, agroforestry, and farm credit—and many have flourished under the right circumstances, even though they may not be easily replicable or have universal application. Customs, tradition, historical relationships and institutions make replication challenging. Skepticism about integrated rural development is certainly justified, but there is reason to hope that we can learn enough to understand constraints, solve problems, adjust for specific factors, and coordinate efforts to get growth. Persistence and patience help.

*Q: One of the issues, that's always seemed to me, is that ministries that usually are responsible for various parts of the economy, as far as the government is concerned, have very great difficulty themselves cutting across one ministry working with another. Did you find that was a problem in Dhaka?*

MYERS: Oh, yeah. Well, looking at Comilla, you know, the planners and academics at Comilla worked so hard and did such intense research, analysis, and planning with wonderful theoreticians and faculty doing training, in an concentrated effort to create village programs, but getting approaches and programs that they could take to scale was difficult. They kept running into problems of traditional relationships, landlords, and local power structure. Grafting modern approaches onto traditional power structures is difficult.

Getting Ministries and agencies to cooperate can be just as difficult. But ministries are no different than donors. I remember the Minister responsible for coordinating assistance after the cyclone complaining that he had to spend most of his time negotiating with 25 different donors, each with different problems they wanted to address, programs they wanted to promote, and reporting they required. Even within USAID missions, getting technical offices to collaborate or sections within technical offices to coordinate, can be a challenge.

*Q: Did you work with the Rockefeller Foundation people? I mean because they were very instrumental in Comilla, were they not?*

MYERS: They may have been, originally. I don't think they were when I was there. Dr. Hameed (Akhtar Hameed Khan) was the great force from Pakistan, and I think Ford (Foundation) was doing more funding for—

*Q: And you mentioned BRAC (Building Resources Across Communities) earlier. Now, is it too early to ask you about BRAC?*

MYERS: Well, it's related. With the cyclone came a tremendous rise in water, sweeping across the islands, many of them really barely more than sandbars. And because of East Pakistan's overpopulation, people were increasingly being forced to move onto marginal lands. They were farming on sandbars in the Delta, and the tidal wave came at a particularly unfortunate time; it was the end of one harvest season and the beginning of a planting season. A lot of people had come down into the area for the harvest and to begin planting a new crop, boosting the number in the path of the cyclone. Many were swept off the islands. Some of the islands lost half their population or more. On one small island near Hatiya called Manpura the tide may have risen ten or 15 feet. People who survived, survived by clinging to palm trees. People forced to cling to the trunks of palm trees for six or seven hours suffered a common injury--acute skin abrasions on the insides of their arms and thighs.

A number of people, including several associated with the Pakistan SEATO (South-East Asia Treaty Organization) Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL), became involved in helping this one island: Manpura). CRL was—and continues to be one of the most interesting research efforts I've run across. Now called the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, it included a fantastic effort to gather information on disease and on family planning. It must have been the source of one of the first demographic and health household surveys. It had a close relationship with Johns Hopkins (University) and Harvard (University) and attracted a brilliant cadre of young doctors who came to do research--and learned to do development.

*Q: Was it AID-related?*

MYERS: It was AID-supported. It became even more AID-supported after independence. I'm not sure where all the funding came from originally, but we were supporting at least some of the research work then. They had people who went on to become real stars in development health: Lincoln Chen, Jon Rohde, Henry Mosley, Al Summers, Richard Cash.

These guys worked very closely with Bengali doctors. And a number of their wives and girlfriends got interested in relief after the cyclone and tidal wave. They set up a program called HELP Manpura based in Chittagong. The women with the relief effort were housed by a generous guy named Fazle Abed, a Shell (Oil Company) executive. He got interested in their work, and many of them got interested in Abed who had studied with

WH Auden at Oxford and was charming.

*Q: Still is.*

MYERS: I haven't seen him since that time but have watched with awe what he has been able to achieve. He's done a most impressive job of building an organization and helping people. But he, after the—We're getting ahead of ourselves a bit, because we haven't gotten to the civil war and the war with India yet. But eventually, Abed moved to London during the Bengali war for Independence, and HELP Manpura morphed into HELP Bangladesh. And then that morphed into BRAC, now with 100,000 employees, one of the largest NGOs in the world.

*Q: Well, I happened to be—You know, I read a terrific book about the struggles in the U.S. Government at the time of East Pakistan. And for those who have not read it, the book called The Blood Telegram is a fascinating book to read and shocking in so many ways.*

*You were described in that book as a brash, young development official or a rebellious junior development officer. And you know, this is not the place to go into the same amount of detail that you maybe did in your letters home, which are quoted extensively in this terrific book. But talk a little bit about what happened and what that did to you, its impact on your AID career. Because I take it that is one reason why you ended up—I'm getting ahead of myself here—but taking a 10-year hiatus. So, talk a little bit about what was going on and what happened in your own development.*

**0:57:43**

MYERS: Well, after the cyclone and tidal wave, because they had come at the end of a harvest, tremendous food stocks were lost. We were all concerned about a famine in East Pakistan. Far more concerned than the Pakistan government. The Pakistan government was more interested in the election scheduled for December and didn't want a lot of international activity in the run up to the election.

*Q: This was 1970?*

MYERS: Yes, December '70. They did not really recognize the extent of the emergency. And the Bengalis really resented the lack of response on the part of the Pakistanis.

So when the election came, they voted 98 percent for the Awami League, which was the Bengali party. And because the Bengalis were both unified and outnumbered West Pakistan's population, they carried the election and should've dominated Pakistan's Parliament. Sheikh Mujib (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman), their leader, should have become the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

This posed real problems for the generals and for Bhutto (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto), who was leader of the Pakistan People's Party.

There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing. General Yahya (Yahya Khan), President at the time,

said that he was negotiating, but laid down strict limits as to how much autonomy the Bengalis could have. Sheikh Mujib had a “Six-point Programme” which included a fair amount of autonomy for East Pakistan.

In any event, on March 25, Yahya accused the Bengalis of treason and ordered a crackdown. That night, the Pakistan military attacked the university (Dacca University); they attacked the Hindu quarter; they arrested people across the city; they tried to neutralize the East Pakistan Rifles, the largely Bengali portion of the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan.

No one knows exactly how many people were killed that night. We were watching the attacks from the top of my house in Gulshan. We could hear machine guns and see tracer bullets. We could see the fires in certain sections of towns, the sections where Hindus lived, and at the university. We could sense what was going on.

In the coming days, the army continued to arrest people, particularly the intellectual leadership; they continued to target Hindus; and we began to see a flood of Hindu refugees moving into India, particularly into Calcutta (Kolkata). The US administration was largely mute, describing the crackdown as an internal problem and declining to comment on it.

So we sent a cable with a letter dissenting from US policy. The cable later became known as “the Blood Telegram” since it was signed by Archer Blood, the US Consul General in Dacca. We could see the situation deteriorating. We became concerned about the possibility of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to India and a possible war with India. Kissinger—

*Q: “We” meaning—*

MYERS: 21 of us signed it, pretty much the entire staff of the consulate and USAID. It was drafted by Scott Butcher, a young political officer, and sent it off.

*Q: Signed by the—?*

MYERS: We signed the letter which was sent off in a cable signed by Arch Blood. Arch associated himself with the principles of the letter and forwarded it in the cable but said he couldn’t sign the dissent letter itself because of his position as Consul General. It was an interesting nuance, but it didn’t protect him from the disapproval—

*Q: Wrath.*

MYERS: —the wrath of Kissinger (U.S. National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger) and Nixon (U.S. President Richard M. Nixon). And boy, it’s interesting reading the traffic, the memcons (memoranda of conversations) and the comments that they made to each other. There was one line, I can’t remember if it was Kissinger or Nixon, talking to William Rogers, who was the Secretary of State at the time, saying something like that

“he had to corral those people in Dacca” and, “What are those guys doing?” And Rogers, I think, says, “Ah, don’t worry about them. They’re just a bunch of anti-war, anti-Vietnam-niks.” You know he probably wasn’t wrong about most of us being against the Vietnam War, but we were feeling pretty rebellious at the time because the policy didn’t make sense to us.

*Q: Well you were seeing all this travesty going on.*

MYERS: We could see it going on. Going into work, we would see dead bodies on the streets and in the park. We would pass by burnt out shanties by the railroad tracks. We could see the pockmarks and holes in the walls of the university dorms. It was brutal.

*Q: Were you able to do any of your work at the time? I mean, could you, in the midst of this, carry out development work?*

MYERS: Not really development work. We were bearing witness more than anything, I think. I remember going out with (W.) Henry Mosley, a doctor from Johns Hopkins working with CRL, one Sunday, in a skiff by ourselves, to a Hindu village that we heard had been attacked. We talked to a man who had just had his house burned and his rice stocks turned to ashes still smoking, who asked, “What should I do? What should I do?” He was looking to the government to save him, not understanding that it was the government that had just burned his village.

The government saw the Hindus as kind of a fifth column. It was not long before Bengali members of the East Pakistan Rifles, policemen and student activists who had fled Dacca began to form an insurgency.

*Q: What was Washington doing while all this was happening?*

MYERS: Well, AID in Washington was split. There were a number of people within the State Department building who signed a note endorsing the Blood Telegram.

*Q: Including the aforementioned T. Swayze.*

MYERS: Including T. Swayze. His name, I think, is at the top of the list.

*Q: Were you there—Did Maury Williams (USAID Deputy Administrator Maurice Williams) come out during—?*

MYERS: Oh, yeah. Maury and I and Joe Wheeler, I think, took a trip to Comilla to see what was going on. We were about to go out to the airport from the Ford Foundation Guesthouse when we began to hear mortar fire. I just remember we ran through the house, and ended up in the backyard, lying prone under some bushes, looking at each other sheepishly: “What are we doing here?”

Then Vince Brown, USAID/Pakistan’s Deputy Director, came in from Islamabad, and we

went down to Feni, where we were surrounded one night with machine gun fire outside the guesthouse and ended up on the floor under our beds. On the trip we saw a massive works project the Pakistanis had organized to protect against invasion from India--thousands of people carrying head baskets of dirt to build embankments into which they then drove sharp punji stakes.

My job for the next couple of months was as field operations officer, which largely meant traveling the countryside to see what was going on, check on rice stocks, and report on who was doing what to whom. On one trip, for instance, to Bhola, an island in the bay, I saw people wearing colored bits of cloth and asked a local, "What's that about?" He said, "Those are the Hindus that we have allowed to stay here." So they were actually marking the Hindus--the sweepers and people whom they wanted to stay on to do particular tasks—and driving the others off into India.

*Q: So how did this all end, as far as you were concerned. I mean, did you stay through the—?*

MYERS: I stayed through both the civil war and the war with India until two days before the Indian Army reached Dacca. One of my most challenging times was when I was charged with evacuation of Americans in Chittagong after the army moved in. We had a number of contractors and their families living in Kaptai on the edge of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

*Q: Were these AID employees?*

MYERS: These were AID contractors working for Allis-Chalmers and other engineering companies on the hydroelectric dam (Kaptai Dam). Several were living there with their families in an area that had been occupied by the Bengali rebels, the Mukti Bahini. I arrived from Dacca shortly after the Pakistani Army had moved into Chittagong. There'd been shooting around the city. A number of people had been killed. Those few people we saw, as we drove largely deserted streets in from the airport, raised their arms in the air at the sound of our cars.

I had a VW van, borrowed from some missionaries, and drove up to Kaptai (about 25 miles). At the time, Kaptai was still being held by Bengali rebels. We needed to cross lines between Pakistan army and the rebels. We were able to bring out a full load of expats living there—largely Americans but a couple of Poles as well. But before we could do so, we needed to convince the Bengali rebel leader in charge to use a crane to lift a gigantic log the rebels had put across the road to control traffic to and from Kaptai along the top of the dam. By the time he agreed, it was too late in the day to drive to Chittagong. We were able to camp out at a Catholic convent, two of us sleeping in the van for security, just outside of Kaptai. We then breached the Pakistani lines early the next morning, before the troops were up, shaved, or had tea.

Some of the contractors chose to stay in Kaptai with their families to protect some Urdu-speaking guards and employees from the Bengali rebels. A few days later, after the

Pakistani army had swept up to the dam, I drove back from Chittagong to bring them out. I found the families fine in their home, but shortly after I arrived, Pakistani troops strode into the living room, stomped out and went next door. There, they took Shamsuddin, a Bengali project manager who had bravely sheltered Urdu-speaking colleagues. A crazed Pakistan Army major accused him of being responsible for the deaths of Urdu-speakers killed earlier by Bengalis in the nearby jute mills. When he seized Shamsuddin and put him in his jeep, we tried to block his exit from the cul-de-sac with our car. He stuck his rifle in our window and told us to move. He then took Shamsuddin around the corner where he shot him. We got a load of people out of Kaptai, but couldn't save Shamsuddin. It was a really difficult time.

*Q: I see that you were awarded the Secretary of State's Award for Valor for that evacuation work.*

MYERS: I was lucky. I was lucky because not everybody came out of the experience in East Pakistan for a full career. Arch Blood's future was sealed with the "Blood Telegram." He came back to Washington and was never reassigned to an appropriate position. I think it hurt Eric in terms of his choices. I sneaked through somehow.

*Q: Well, I mean, you had this experience. But when did you leave East Pakistan?*

MYERS: I left two days before the Indian Army got to Dacca.

*Q: Did you close out the provincial office?*

MYERS: There were five of us left in December. When the war with India broke out, we moved into the InterCon (InterContinental) Hotel and spent our days collecting stories on what was going on and sending cables. And watching from the roof of the hotel as the Indian planes came out of the sun to bomb the airport and engaged Pakistani planes in aerial dogfights.

Our nights were spent playing poker with the journalists in town--Jack Foisie of the LA Times, Jim Sterba of the New York Times, Dan Coggin of Time Magazine, and Peter Kann, who won a Pulitzer for his reporting on East Pakistan and later headed the Wall Street Journal, all part of a generation of great journalists who had come up from Vietnam to cover the India-Pakistan war.

I wished they followed up on an incident one night when we heard a plane—a prop plane—buzzing the hotel. I'm convinced that it was an old pesticide spraying plane that the Pakistanis had rigged with a bomb, because we heard the plane fly over the hotel and then a thud. The next day we found a crater in the road out front with a bomb in it. It hadn't gone off. The bomb had US markings. What you might call, "A gift of the American people."

A similar bomb had been dropped at the UNDP (United Nations Development Program). I think the Pakistanis had gotten so desperate at this stage that they dropped a couple of

bombs on the international centers in Dacca in hopes that the damage would force the international community to intervene.

But I've never seen any reporting about it. So I'm hoping that this oral history may find somebody who can say whether this really happened or is just an urban legend.

*Q: All right, well we'll put that on the list of things that need to be examined.*

*This was quite a traumatic, I would've thought, quite a traumatic adventure. This was your first post. You're there, and most people go out, and they're working, you know, on development programs. And here you are, trying to cope with opposition to US policy, seeing real disaster on the ground. Any particular message—*

MYERS: I did feel depressed, but don't remember the Agency's checking for trauma. I remember the culture shock when I came back to find that people were not so involved in East Pakistan. They were interested in other things.

But Herb (C. Herbert Rees) had the good sense to put me on Nepal and Ceylon. Herb was head of the Office of South Asia and someone who spent much of his career developing and promoting new officers. It was a good assignment. I got to work with Carter Ide, then mission director in Nepal. Carter was an antidote to anybody feeling down. He would come into the office wearing a Nepali topi and make a convincing case that there was no place greater than Nepal.

He taught me how a mission could really use the desk (a post's liaison office in Washington). When I went on TDY (temporary duty) to Nepal, he treated me like a deputy. He put me in the office next to him; included me in all his meetings; took me trekking on the weekend with Carol (Caroline Clendening) Laise, then ambassador, and wife of then Ambassador to Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker; and gave me a helicopter—AID had helicopters in those days—and sent me out on a tour of the Rapti Valley where we had big projects.

And then when I was back on the desk, he would call me, and made me feel like I was the mission's representative in Washington. The experience convinced me that the desk officer job can be one of the best jobs in Washington.

*Q: And that was something that, when you became a mission director, you were able to exploit?*

MYERS: I tried to keep it in mind. I loved dealing with desks for the most part. I was, later, Russia desk officer when Jim Norris was the Mission Director and just starting the program there, and felt the same way. It was just— It's a fantastic job.

But anyway, Carter was great. Nepal was good. That was a cure for any lingering depression.

*Q: I'm going to ask you about why, then, you decided to leave AID if all this was so great. But before we get there: Joe Wheeler. You mentioned Carter Ide. You mentioned Herb Reese. Joe Wheeler: Any thoughts about Joe Wheeler at this stage?*

MYERS: Yeah, Joe Wheeler was a stupendous Director. He was a great recruiter and had an inclusive management style. He brought over some of the best young officers I'd ever seen: Dave Mathieson, Tony Schwartzwalder, Elliott Weiss, Mike Hager. Brilliant guys. They were all "Type A," highly-charged, ambitious, and thoughtful guys. And he gave them all interesting assignments and portfolios. I think he made them all assistants to the director.

He was wonderfully collegial, great on contingency planning, and made us all feel part of the process. When I went to Islamabad, he had me over to dinner with a bunch of them. And we talked about where we should be going when crisis hit. We had teams to analyze what the impact of the refugees coming back might be, how we should plan for their return, and the possibility of a famine. We really felt like a mission.

He was absolutely a terrific guy, who played a real role in my life later, because when I wanted to come back to AID, after nearly a decade outside, he helped me find my way.

But talking about Tony Schwartzwalder reminds me of my great failed opportunity to influence policy, when I was called over to Islamabad to brief Kissinger on the situation in East Pakistan. It was going to be at a dinner at Tony's house.

*Q: Kissinger was going to be at Tony's house?*

MYERS: That's what we thought. So we got all ready.

*Q: Kissinger at that point was the National Security Advisor?*

MYERS: Yeah. And so we got ready for the briefing, and we were going to convince him that the US policy was wrong, that we should be paying much more attention to what the Bengalis were saying. Dinner comes, and he doesn't show up. But Hal (Harold H.) Saunders comes from NSC (U.S. National Security Council). And Hal says, "Well, we're sorry. Kissinger can't come. He's indisposed. He's got a stomach ailment. He's up in Nathiagali (Pakistan) recovering." So we said, "Ah, that's too bad. Here's what's going on in Bangladesh."

Of course, then we find out he's in—

*Q: China.*

MYERS: China. And that was a revelation to me, and a great lesson in the role that geopolitics plays in our development programs. I was stunned to realize that we could easily be focused on our part of the world and miss the big picture completely. Here we were thinking that East Pakistan, and what was going on there, was the center of the

universe. And this was just a sideshow for Kissinger and Nixon. The opening to China was the big show.

*Q: Well, as the Blood Telegram book describes, that factor was instrumental in their being as callous as they were. That doesn't justify the—*

MYERS: Oh, yeah. They were callous. But a lot of it is personality too. Nixon hated Indira Gandhi and liked Yahya.

*Q: This was the Kissinger trip to lay the groundwork—*

MYERS: To China. To lay the groundwork.

*Q: That's interesting. So, but why was it at Tony Schwartzwalders house instead of Joe Wheelers house? All part of the ruse. OK, so there you are after Dacca, you're back in Washington: still single?*

MYERS: I was still single. Yeah.

*Q: And these were jobs that were fun, for the reasons you've described.*

MYERS: It was fun. I was the Nepal-Ceylon Desk Officer. And Herb did something that I thought was particularly good for an office director. He made an effort to refresh thinking in the bureaucracy. He had, maybe once a month, a sort of a development studies session. He'd invite us all in. And we'd all take turns presenting our country and something about it.

I remember role playing. I was doing Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and assigned everybody who was there—a bunch of other interns and young officers—roles as a minister of agriculture in Sri Lanka, or minister of finance, and here's a problem that we've got to solve. Herb was looking at ways of joining our academic background and our practical AID experience and making work a continuing learning exercise.

*Q: And these were not just for the desk officers. I mean they were for the entire—?*

MYERS: The office, his office.

*Q: Did you ever meet anybody in AID who did something similar to that? I mean, was this something uniquely Herb Rees?*

MYERS: You know, I've been in missions in which there have been efforts to do some of this. We did it in Indonesia. Bill Fuller (William P. Fuller) was good at combining academics and big picture thinking with understanding context and practical programming. But it impressed on me the possibilities for expanding thinking within the confines of the bureaucracy.

*Q: Easier to accomplish maybe in a mission than it is in Washington.*

MYERS: I think it could still be done in Washington.

*Q: But it's all part of— It sounds like a continuing effort to keep and engage people who might otherwise get caught up in overly bureaucratic—*

MYERS: Yeah. And give you a chance to look at the big picture, step back. It was really a nice exercise.

*Q: So why, given that you liked what Herb was doing, you liked working with Carter Ide, what led you to leave AID? This was 1972, right?*

MYERS: Six weeks to clear an agricultural cable. Trying to get clearances on a simple cable for a project on agricultural colleges is what I remember. I remember getting very frustrated with the clearance process, trying to get any decisions made.

*Q: '72. Now, Hannah was the Administrator?*

MYERS: Yes. Don McDonald was the Assistant Administrator for Asia.

*Q: So Nixon was re-elected, and so this was before Watergate?*

MYERS: It was before the Watergate hearings, but after the break-in.

*Q: So again, six weeks to clear a cable was enough to drive you out of AID?*

MYERS: Well that plus looking at, was I ready to go overseas again? There were social pressures as well. I thought, eventually I wanted to get married. Most of my friends were interested in domestic issues. I wanted to be engaged in something that bridged domestic and international concerns. I wasn't ready to go back overseas right away. I wanted to be in the U.S. I was finding it a little stifling being in a big bureaucracy. Protest was in the air—civil rights and Vietnam were still major issues-

One Sunday, I was playing touch football with Elliot Weiss when he said, "I'm starting a new research company. I'm the only person hired so far. We're going to look questions of corporate social responsibility." Students were sitting in administration offices of colleges and universities around the country protesting their investment in companies doing business in apartheid South Africa. Several foundations, as large stockholders, were thinking about their responsibility as ethical investors on environmental, equal employment and foreign investment concerns. They had agreed to join with a collection of 20 universities and colleges to establish a research company to look at questions of corporate social responsibility, particularly issues being raised by concerned shareholders at companies' annual meetings.

I asked if I could work on issues relating to South Africa. Elliott agreed and I signed up. I

talked to Herb about it, and he agreed but suggested I apply for a leave of absence. AID offered a leave and I left two weeks later.

*Q: So this was the Investor Responsibility Research Center (IRRC) you helped launch?*

MYERS: Yes.

*Q: Parenthetically, one summer, my son worked there, when he was in college, when he was at Swarthmore.*

MYERS: Did he?

*Q: And Lynn Jones, Lloyd Jones's (Tony Lloyd-Jones?) wife, worked there too. Do you remember that?*

MYERS: No, that must've been after I left. When was your son there?

*Q: Long after you. He would've been—*

MYERS: In the '80s some time?

*Q: Yeah, I mean, he was in college. He was born in '69. So it would've been late in the '80s. And you were there actually for 10 years?*

MYERS: Yes. I took a leave of absence from AID. I argued at the time that, increasingly, it wasn't just development organizations having impact in developing countries but private corporations as well. And that to be effective in development, it would be helpful to know more about what the private sector was doing. And that time in IRRC would give me a good chance to—

*Q: AID gave you a leave of absence?*

MYERS: They gave me a leave of absence, which they extended for three years. After the third year, they actually gave me an evaluation and ranked me in the lower 25 percent of my class which seemed appropriate since I hadn't been there for three years.

*Q: Were they serious?*

MYERS: They rated me. I mean, I hadn't been there so—so I quit before they selected me out.

*Q: But did you spend—I was interested with all the South Africa business. I mean, did you have any links to South Africa at all before you got interested in IRRC?*

MYERS: Well, I'd done work on it in graduate school. I wrote papers on the liberation movements in Portuguese Africa. So I was interested in Angola, particularly, and

Mozambique. My advisor, (W.) Scott Thompson, had done work on South Africa. I was aware of the Sharpeville massacre from my Fletcher studies. I'd followed the liberation movements in Southern Africa.

*Q: So then, those ten years, did you spend most of your time working on South African investment issues?*

MYERS: Well, we had a wide range of issues, depending on the shareholder resolutions which came up each year at corporate annual meetings. I focused on foreign investment issues, not just South Africa, but Exxon's work in Angola, Newmont in Namibia, Union Carbide in Zimbabwe, and broader issues like marketing of pesticides in third world countries. Marketing of infant formula was a big issue.

Marketing the pesticides actually tied in with work that I had done in East Pakistan. In East Pakistan, we had been concerned that pesticides that we were bringing into Pakistan were being dumped in the rivers. And we were concerned about the environmental impact. Some Bengalis were arguing that we should halt our pesticide imports because they weren't being used. Bribes were being paid to be the Ministry of Agriculture to order more pesticides. And people in the Ministry were making a lot of money off it. And we couldn't control its use.

Anyway, when I got to IRRC, that was a natural. Marketing of infant formula was also quite a big issue. Using formula involved using water—often polluted—and denying newborns the antibodies that come with breast milk. Companies were being asked to stop misleading advertising such as using women in nurses' uniforms to market formula to new mothers. Arms sales and tobacco marketing—pushing cigarettes—in developing countries were also issues we had to look at. The role of corporations in South Africa was far and away the largest.

We also covered a wide range of domestic concerns relating to equal opportunity, the environment, and labor. I worked on energy and environmental concerns, like nuclear power and coal. At that time power companies were talking about having 2,000 nuclear power plants in the U.S. by the year 2000. But from our research, it was apparent that in fact we weren't going to build any more because it was becoming too expensive to build them. The safety concerns and the licensing process were drawing out approval and construction times.

*Q: The problem of waste disposal and other things.*

MYERS: Well, we hadn't really worked that out. We still haven't worked it out.

*Q: So did you, again looking back on this, are you glad you made this move? Was this ten years spent outside of AID worthwhile, and did you learn enough to make it worth the effort?*

MYERS: Well, that's a good question. You know, I missed a big chunk of the learning I

would've gotten at that mid-level about the guts of AID's operations--programming, project design and contracting. So, I would've—

*Q: Well, you would've been—I mean, you were mid-level already.*

MYERS: Well, there was a body of experience, when I got back to AID, which I realized I'd missed completely. But I loved the range of subjects that we got to deal with at IRRC. I enjoyed research and writing and the chance to look at what corporations were doing and to talk to a lot of chief executives and public interest groups concerned about what they were doing. I could meet company leaders and say that our subscribers—Bank of America, Wells Fargo, the City of New York, California State Pension Board, as well as universities and foundations--wanted to know about their policy and operations in South Africa or their plans for energy conservation or for equal employment.

*Q: And they would answer you?*

MYERS: They would have to answer because these issues were coming up at their annual meetings, and the power to embarrass—in those days--was huge. These guys were being questioned at their annual meetings in front of their shareholders and the press, and they did not want to be embarrassed.

They would spend a lot of time with us. I'd visit South Africa for a month or more every couple of years and spend a half day with the managing director of a company talking about labor practices and then interview a range of workers, both African and white. For context, I'd interview as many people as I could from journalists to African labor leaders, the head of the Afrikaner Broederbond, and chairman of the central bank, student activists, and black nationalists. I talked with a wide range of South Africans, including a memorable afternoon with Steve Biko, the remarkable leader of the black consciousness movement, while he was under banning orders (prohibited from being in a meeting of more than three people at a time). Several years later he was badly beaten by security officers and died in police custody.

The job at IRRC included a short-term stint on the Hill (Capitol Hill) for three months in 1976 organizing hearings for Senator Dick Clark (D-Iowa) on US investment in South Africa. It was enlightening to watch Congress operate and prepare for a hearing. It was a little like orchestrating a theater production, developing a script and recruiting actors, except some of the actors end up doing improv. Work at IRRC also involved consulting with Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie and other foundations and exposure to their role in influencing policy. It showed me that there was life outside of AID, a helpful perspective, so that when I went back, I didn't feel that it was the only game in town.

*Q: You were also teaching at Georgetown (University) at this time?*

MYERS: Yes, as adjuncts, Jamie Heard, an IRRC colleague, and I taught two sessions on corporate social responsibility at the business school.

The time in Washington helped me catch up on what others in my generation were doing in the United States—what they had decided to do in life—and, most significantly, to meet Lynn Graybeal on a Potomac Appalachian Trail Club outing one February. I fell in love, told friends within two weeks that I had met the woman I wanted to marry, and we were married 18 months later.

*Q: Oh, finally!*

MYERS: At last, I fell in love with a hiker, teacher, and intrepid explorer with temperament for travel and a fine sense of humor. And our timing was lucky. Since Elliott had started IRRC, we could make our own personnel policies. One of the policies he introduced was to offer employees who stayed six years six months off with full pay. It was a great policy and a piece of good fortune.

*Q: A sabbatical notion?*

MYERS: A sabbatical. So I stayed six years. Lynn and I got married and we took off around the world for most of the six months. The break also gave me a time to take a book I'd written for IRRC, double space it, footnote it, turn it in to get my Ph.D. finally.

*Q: What was the title of your Ph.D.?*

MYERS: It was “A Study of US Multinational Corporations in South Africa and Their Potential Impact on Change in South Africa’s Apartheid Policies.”

*Q: I see. So it had really developed out of— I mean, you had passed your orals under some other rubric, but the dissertation was on material you developed during the time at IRRC.*

MYERS: Right, exactly. It built on a book on the role of US companies in South Africa which I'd done for IRRC. I was able to write an introductory chapter on theories relating to the role of foreign investment in development and the use of economic sanctions as a tool of foreign policy, incorporate research on US companies in South Africa as a case study, and then arrive at some conclusions to wrap it up.

*Q: Was this before you took your sabbatical or during the sabbatical?*

MYERS: The early part of the sabbatical was spent in the SAIS (Johns Hopkins School of Advance International Studies) library researching the introductory chapters and conjuring the conclusion. Once I turned it in, we got married and took off on our honeymoon.

*Q: And did your wife—Was your wife working at the time?*

MYERS: Lynn is a teacher of kids with learning disabilities. She was able to take the time off. She had already joined me earlier on one of my trips to South Africa, and we'd

been able to travel there, into Botswana to the Okavango (Delta), and then to Kinshasa and Abidjan. We took taxis and buses through Ivory Coast and Upper Volta, (now Burkina Faso), to Bamako and Timbuktu. The trip would be so much harder to do today.

That trip was Lynn's first to Africa. She comes from a small town in Southwest Virginia—about 5,000 people on the edge of Appalachia. But she wasn't new to traveling. She had traveled to Europe after graduation—including a side jaunt to Moscow and time working at the Munich Olympics, but had not travelled to developing countries.

*Q: So you really gave her a full exposure to your world.*

MYERS: She looked at this kind of travel and discovered she liked it. She had no problem on our African travels, taking a VeloSoleX up a rocky road to visit the Dogon in Mali or getting lost in a small plane over the Kalahari. She has a good attitude--an easy-going disposition and willingness to try almost anything.

*Q: It was after your Africa trip you got married?*

MYERS: We got married after that.

*Q: So she passed the test.*

MYERS: Well, I guess we both did! And then, off we went on our honeymoon, including visits to a number of AID missions, seeing old friends in the Philippines and Indonesia and India, hiking in Nepal, getting robbed in Kenya, and winding down in Egypt and Israel. The trip helped us decide that maybe it would be good, both professionally and personally, to live overseas. The issues IRRC was dealing with weren't changing much year-to-year, and I had a good chance already to weigh on them. USAID was wrestling with a far broader array of problems, and the agency, despite its bureaucracy, offered both an opportunity to learn about them and the resources to try to do something about them. And on the personal side, we were getting ready for a family, and I needed to think seriously about a career. But getting back in wasn't easy—it took close to two years to get back into AID.

*Q: Now why was that? What was involved in getting back into AID? This was--You're talking about 1980 or so that you were anxious to get back? I'm trying to think of what's going on in the 1980s.*

MYERS: Well, Reagan. Reagan had been elected, and AID was trying to align with the priorities of the new administration. They were setting up a private sector office. I made the case that my time at IRRC had given me private sector experience.

*Q: Did you ever manage a payroll?*

MYERS: Well, the argument was probably a bit of a stretch. I had the responsibility for managing IRRC's budget--thankfully we had a good outside accountant. We had a few

employees to manage, and, by the time I left, a several million-dollar budget. In re-applying to AID, I argued that I'd been both operating in the private sector and studying it, including research on foreign investment and corporate operations in developing countries for the last ten years, which was useful background for the new private sector program. I was fortunate that Joe Wheeler was deputy administrator at the time, and I suspect he supported the application.

*Q: So did Elise DuPont hire you?*

MYERS: She ran the new Bureau for Private Enterprise but her deputy, Ed (Edgar C.) Harrell, was the one who interviewed me. He then gave me a test. I had to go out to Indonesia to design a private sector project. I went to Jakarta along with Tom Hexner, formerly with the Harvard Institute for International Development who then was the head (and quite possibly the only employee) of his own firm with the quirky name of Crux.

*Q: You went out as a consultant?*

MYERS: Tom and I went out as consultants in May 1982 for three weeks to figure out what Indonesia could do to attract investment and develop its private sector. In close consultation with the Mission and some Indonesians in the Ministry of Finance and the business community, we designed a real grab bag of a private-sector project. It included consultancies for American companies who wanted to do business in South Africa—free advice to the Indonesians who wanted to connect with American companies, resources for policy studies to change the environment for trade and investment, internships for Indonesians interested in working with American companies. It was an eclectic project design which we presented back in Washington on behalf of the Mission to Charlie Greenleaf, then the Assistant Administrator for Asia.

*Q: (M.) Peter McPherson was the Administrator. And they liked this project so much they actually made you an offer?*

MYERS: McPherson was Administrator, and, yes, they liked it enough. Tom Hexner, as we finished the design said, "Thank god we don't have to implement this." The next thing I knew, Bill Fuller had said, "OK, come on out and implement it."

*Q: Bill Fuller was the mission director?*

MYERS: Bill was mission director. An interesting thing about Bill—like the guy who had been the mission director in Kenya during my time there--was that he was a political appointee. This is fairly unusual today, but I think less so early on. USAID has not had a tradition of political appointees for mission director.

*Q: That's true. You initially had the "tycoons" in the '60s.*

MYERS: Yes. Kennedy recruited a batch of business executives from companies across the country just after AID was launched in "Operation Tycoon." In AID's early days,

drawing from outside of government for leadership was more common.

*Q: Right. But then as you say, it gradually became Senior Foreign Service people.*

MYERS: Yes. But there's no reason why field leadership has to be limited to career foreign service officers. In fact, drawing from outside could be an excellent way to bring in fresh and highly qualified talent. Bill Fuller came out of the Ford Foundation in Bangladesh. He had years of experience in development. He had an MBA from Harvard and a Ph.D. in political science from Stanford. He was—

*Q: Well-qualified.*

MYERS: Absolutely superb. Years later I made the argument to Brian when he was on a field trip to India—

*Q: (J.) Brian Atwood (former USAID Administrator)?*

MYERS: Yes. When he said, "We're having trouble getting mission directors." I said, "You know, you can do political appointees." And he later appointed Larry Garber (Lawrence Garber, former Deputy Assistant Administrator) as Mission Director in West Bank-Gaza. Larry was an excellent choice. I think AID needs to consider using that tool more effectively, particularly as we get thin in our top ranks.

*Q: Yeah, and these are quite different from when you think of political appointees for—*

MYERS: Absolutely. It is something of a high-risk approach. It has to be done judiciously. You could use political appointments to get really qualified people and refresh the talent pool. Or you could use them to repay political favors and end up with hacks. Given the nature of USAID's work, the location of our missions and the lack of perks, candidates are unlikely to be interested in the job unless they care about development, so the danger of getting inappropriate cronies may be less than for other government positions.

*Q: That's what I mean. This is not, as in many of the top ambassadorships that go this way, based on financial contributions. What you're talking about is getting outsiders into the system which—*

MYERS: When you think of John Lewis, Dean of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School and development economist, as the mission director in India, for example, somebody who's academically qualified, has made his life studying economic development—take him and put him in charge of an AID program.

*Q: Right. Certainly a lot of the standouts are people like that. Bob Neuter is a good example.*

MYERS: It's something I think we ought to consider, although we need to be aware of

the risks. You might want to pair a good, technically qualified, political appointee with an experienced deputy who understands USAID's policies and procedures and has experience in working the bureaucracy.

*Q: OK, and in the beginning—This may be a good time to break it off before resuming again. So you were out of USAID from 1972 to '82 and then came back in '82 as what?*

MYERS: As a private sector officer and headed to Jakarta to head up the new private sector office, called the Office of Employment and Enterprise Development, managing a range of projects with the flexibility to respond quickly to new opportunities. We had funds appropriated to support policy reform. Its flexibility turned out to be its great strength.

*Q: But it specifically was for the private—?*

MYERS: Policy reform and institutional support related to private sector development. We worked closely with the Harvard group (HIID) in Indonesia which was working within a Policy Implementation Center of the Ministry of Finance. They would do studies with the Indonesians on tax reform which we would use to inform the work of long-term advisors we could bring out on tax administration. We were in a position to go to the IRS (U.S. Internal Revenue Service) and say, "Can you send out a team?" We had money available, and the flexibility to tap it, even though we never had said specifically in the original project design that we were going to work on taxes.

Another example--Harvard and the Ministry of Finance identified a need for technical assistance on customs policy and administration. We brought out people to help them with customs. We recruited people from Commerce (U.S. Department of Commerce) to help on trade issues, training Indonesians on the US import quota system.

*Q: In those days, wasn't it true that you had to have your Congressional presentation fairly specific?*

MYERS: This is where Bill was particularly good. He had us design two projects: the private sector project which allowed us to support policy and institutions related to private sector strengthening and a second called the Development Studies Project, which funded a variety of research activities with Indonesians on development issues.

*Q: Working with BAPPENAS (Indonesia Ministry of National Development Planning)?*

MYERS: The private sector project worked largely with the Ministry of Finance and the Investment Coordinating Board and the development studies project with BAPPENAS.

*Q: So they were worded sufficiently broadly that you could do individual pieces within them that did not require going back and explaining to Congress?*

MYERS: Exactly. Like we identified a need to professionalize business education just as

Indonesians were starting a private business institute. Within six weeks, we were able to have a first-class advisor out providing them assistance.

*Q: And who found these advisors? Did Washington? Did your desk officer back in Washington do it?*

MYERS: I think that the private sector office helped us actually. I think I went back to Ed Harrell and his people with a request, and they identified someone appropriate.

*Q: They were people who knew something about Indonesia, or they were sufficiently well-tuned in to what was needed out there?*

MYERS: They were experts in their field. They were subject matter experts who didn't always know much about Indonesia. We left it to the Indonesians to figure out whether the advice was appropriate in the Indonesian context.

For instance, my counterpart was Marzuki Usman in the Ministry of Finance. Absolutely wonderful guy. We would jog on Sundays, and during the jog we would talk about all sorts of social stuff. Then we'd get back and have tea on his patio and talk about work, "OK, what do you need during the next couple of weeks? What should we be working on?"

He'd say, "I really wish I knew more about pension reform. We're thinking of setting up a pension system." OK, we'd ask Washington to find someone to work on pensions with him—in this case, it turned out to be Tom O'Neil, Tip O'Neill's son.

Marzuki would say, "You know we really need help on customs reform." OK, we'd get some customs people.

I loved working with him. We had a number of counterparts like that. I worked with Ma'rie Muhammad, who eventually became Minister of Finance. On privatization, he'd say, "I need to know more about privatization. The trouble is when we move privatize a state-owned corporation, we get blocked by the Suhartos and their family. What can I do to prevent that?"

I said, "OK, we'll bring some people out, and you can go back to Washington for the workshop we're having on privatization. They'll tell you about how other countries are handling privatization and how you might go about it." And off he would go.

Many of the Indonesians, because of their experience in the U.S., knew how we worked, they trusted us, yet they knew realistically what was possible within their own constraints. On the issue of corruption, for example, a problem which continues to bedevil particularly those countries like Indonesia with abundant natural resources, one official told me, "When I joined the government, I wanted to be like a fish in the ocean, I could swim there without getting salty. Later, I just wanted to be like the ocean, not so polluted that other fish couldn't survive."

*Q: So you found this a very satisfying job--And results were good, as far as you were concerned?*

MYERS: It was a terrific job, and the results were good, although often the rewards were long-term in coming. I was impressed to read recently that Marzuki has become head of Jakarta's now vibrant stock exchange—we had worked together on setting up the first exchange in the 1980s.

One of the greatest successes was support to Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI) and the provincial development banks on rural credit, developing what became one of the most successful savings and credit operations in the world. BRI eventually developed its own institute that has now trained thousands of experts from more than 50 countries.

*Q: Was the World Bank working in this area too?*

MYERS: I can't remember close work with them on micro-finance at this time—this was before CGAP (the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor focused on financial services like microfinance), but our overall relationship with the Bank was handled well above my level and I may be forgetting something. Bill Fuller was working closely with the Bank's country director Russ Cheetham and they conferred regularly.

*Q: And as far as influencing AID-Washington on what AID could do in the private sector, do you have any thoughts about that? I mean that AID's record of working with the private sector is pretty checkered over the decades.*

MYERS: You know, I'm not sure that we influenced the private sector office very much, but the experience did shape my thinking. It made me more of a traditionalist, thinking that technical assistance to develop financial institutions and advise on policy was more effective than some of these more exotic things that we were trying to do, like securitization of debt or venture capital. Some of the things we were trying—coming out of Washington were ideas that I thought inappropriate. I've always been leery of AID's support for enterprise funds, for example.

*Q: Is this before the days of public-private partnerships? I mean your emphasis is more on technical assistance here.*

MYERS: It was beginning. We had a scholarship program, for example, with the Ministry of Finance paying for Indonesians to have internships in US companies and USAID would do the matchmaking and pay for travel. We were providing consultant services to US companies considering investments in Indonesia and advice to the Investment Coordinating Board on policies to encourage foreign investment. By the time I got to India, the concept of public-private partnership was becoming more sophisticated. Our private sector project in those years, encouraging internships with American companies and trying to connect US and Indonesia entrepreneurs, represented an approach to public private partnership, although more tentative than what we would try

later in Indonesia, India and Russia as USAID developed its Global Development Alliance (GDA) programs.

*Q: For this period of four years or so that you were in this job in Jakarta, it was the ability to provide, to be responsive, to the Indonesian officials who had responsibilities in this area to be able to plug gaps in their knowledge? That's the way it was, and your usefulness was there?*

MYERS: Yes, and also to send people abroad for exposure. Like, Marzuki saying, "We need some help on our stock exchange." They were just talking about setting up a stock exchange. So, Marzuki picked a mid-level official from the Ministry and we sent him to the New York Institute of Finance for a program. He went on to become the head of the stock exchange and, eventually, Minister of Finance.

*Q: I don't know to what extent AID does much of this anymore, but certainly in my experience, the Participant Training Program would offer the most valuable experience in the eyes of these people. And you're describing—*

MYERS: Exactly. The effort in Indonesia was the most effective use of participant training that I experienced.

It goes back to the late 1950s and mid-60s when the Berkeley Mafia, people like Ali Wardhana, Emil Salim, Widjojo Nitisastro, went off to Berkeley with Ford Foundation sponsorship and returned to lead the economic recovery after Suharto became President. That was a model for us. USAID became very active in supporting training abroad. By the 1990s, USAID had sent more than 20,000 Indonesians to the US for masters (degrees) or Ph.D.'s. 98 percent of them returned—a remarkable return rate. Indonesians love Indonesia. They would much rather be there than anywhere else. And many of the returnees went on to greatness. They were leaders in government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and business.

It wasn't just the Berkeley "mafia"; it was the Duke (University) "mafia", the (University of) North Carolina "mafia", the (University of) Wisconsin "mafia". There were dozens of different "mafias" that had been established by participant training.

*Q: All right, so there you were. You finished up in Jakarta in this chief as Employment and Enterprise Development, working for Bill Fuller. Was he there the full time you were there?*

MYERS: Yes. He was replaced by David Merrill shortly after I left.

*Q: Any other people you remember vividly from that period?*

MYERS: Well, Gordon West was working with me on private sector development and headed our work on microfinance. Dick (Richard) Cobb was in agriculture. Doug Tinsler was there for a while after Dick left. Walter North was handling the NGO outreach,

working with the Asia Foundation and Indonesian NGOs. Jon Sperling, Marge Bonner, and Steve Hadley were in the Program Office. Diana Putman was an IDI in agriculture. Jim Gingerich worked Agriculture and Molly (Gingerich) was doing health and population with Manny Voulgaropoulos (Dr. V). Ross Coggins was doing food.

*Q: This was the Ross Coggins who wrote that—?*

MYERS: Yes, “The Development Set,” written well before I met him. Ross had worked as a missionary at one time in Indonesia, before USAID. He knew us and skewered us with great wit. He was one of the funniest guys around.

*Q: What we’re talking about, for the uninitiated, is a poster, a long poem called “The Development Set” by Ross Coggins, which is very funny.*

MYERS: It’s worth Googling. (<http://www.owen.org/blog/116>)

*Q: Yeah, worth it, and well-illustrated. OK, so you left Indonesia in 1987, and you went to Senegal directly?*

MYERS: Yes. Well, we came back for some French training and for the delivery of Laura, our second daughter. Now this was back—We had Nathaniel just before going to Indonesia. Then Anna arrived while we were in Indonesia. And Laura, after Indonesia, when we were back in the United States for language training. We were a full complement.

*Q: Was it—just to go back—was family life in Indonesia easy and comfortable?*

MYERS: Oh, it was terrific. There was a strong sense of community. There were lots of other people with young kids. The schools were excellent.

*Q: Did you live in Kebayoran (Kebayoran Baru suburb)?*

MYERS: We lived in Kebayoran on Hang Tuah Raya. Lynn was able to work. She teaches kids with learning disabilities, was able to do tutoring, and then signed full time with the elementary school.

We went to the Puncak (the Indonesian version of a hill station) on a monthly basis to a cabin we shared with three other families and to Bali every couple of months. We have wonderful memories of being in Indonesia with kids. I don’t know that many places where people love kids as much as Indonesia.

*Q: That’s right, yeah. And this was the time when the economic team was still quite dominant in terms of certain economic policy issues? The Suharto regime was not oppressive at this time in a way that was—*

MYERS: They were oppressive in two ways, which we really didn’t—I really didn’t—

understand at the time. In 1984, there was resistance by Islamic fundamentalists to the Indonesian government's insistence on adherence to Pancasila—the country's foundational philosophy--and attacks by security forces on demonstrators in Tanjung Priok. These may have been early signs of a new radical Islam that we didn't really understand.

And then the other was an attack on petty criminals and drug traffickers, often profiled as people who were tattooed, by mysterious gunmen. It reminds me of (President Rodrigo) Duterte's attacks in the Philippines today on people accused of drug-related crimes.

So, there was a feeling that the government was wielding its repressive powers. There were problems in East Timor which would flare up occasionally raising concerns about human rights, and we were supporting a number of NGOs there. Our own office had a program in Aceh to help develop small businesses, specifically in response to concerns about the autonomy movement in Aceh.

*Q: This was an AID project?*

MYERS: This was part of our private sector portfolio, an AID effort in Lhokseumawe to promote small business development. The hope was to take advantage of major new investment in natural gas. We hired Sumitro's (Indonesian economist Raden Mas Sumitro Djojohadikusumo) firm to do research on it.

Natural gas had been discovered, and the real question was how to integrate this resource with small business development and other activities to promote growth and jobs. I'm sorry to say I don't think we were particularly successful.

*Q: A particularly tough area to be working in.*

MYERS: Tough in part because of Aceh's history--it had long fought for independence and greater autonomy--but also because of the nature of the task, trying to take advantage of resource wealth to get broader growth; making the best use of natural resources and avoiding the resource curse, even in a country as well-managed as Indonesia, can be difficult. We didn't have much success in figuring out how to take advantage of what Exxon was doing there in terms of natural gas development to spur small business development. We never came up with a good plan for integration of foreign investment with small and medium enterprise development.

*Q: The departure from Indonesia, though, was one—I mean, did you regret leaving Indonesia at that time? Or was it just time to go?*

MYERS: You know, AID tours are a little bit like being in college. Your freshman year, you're just learning your way. Sophomore year, you're feeling a little better. Junior year, you're just, "OK, this is getting to be good." Senior year, you've figured things out and are feeling productive. And I really wanted a fifth year. I think a fifth or a sixth year would've been good.

*Q: But AID—Did AID's rules—Did it prevent—?*

MYERS: Tours were normally two-years, and length of time at post usually included two-tours. Washington said it was time to move on, and Bill Fuller was leaving, and so it seemed like a natural transition.

I was aiming to go to Zimbabwe. I wanted to get back to Southern Africa, but missed my mark and ended up in Senegal.

*Q: I mean, when you were aiming to, how much flexibility did you have in where your next post would be? Did AID give you a chance to ask and to—?*

MYERS: That is a good question. We had some flexibility. The list of openings would come out, and we'd have a chance to bid, listing our preferences. But then you'd better start calling people, letting them know you're interested, and seeing if there were people who could make calls for you.

The actual decision-making process was opaque, and, as in any bureaucracy, you needed to look out for yourself. You had to make your contacts. You had to pitch and make your interests and concerns known. I also learned that the system can be ad-hoc and arbitrary, and when it doesn't go your way, you can't take it personally. It can abuse us all.

I had actually started the process with an offer to go to India which we all, Lynn and the kids, were excited about. And then the mission director who had made the offer went to Washington on TDY and met somebody more appropriate and recruited him. That was the last I heard about the job until I called his deputy and heard that the position was no longer available, and so I started look for other possibilities. I wanted to go to Zimbabwe, but Washington said, "No, Haiti has a greater need." I agreed to go to Haiti until Lynn said, "Wait a minute. There's a chance that we'd have an evacuation in Haiti." So I said, "OK, I can't do that," and asked for Senegal.

*Q: So you could say "no", and it wouldn't destroy your career?*

MYERS: It could. It depended on whom you were saying "no" to. I was lucky. Linda (Linda E.) Morse, for instance, was the one recruiting for Haiti. When I told her I couldn't go, she was understanding and let me off the hook. Fortunately, she didn't hold it against me and, ultimately, ended up being, probably, the most important person in shaping my career at AID.

*Q: Why is that? How is that?*

MYERS: Well, because she was the person who later allowed me to persuade her that I should go to India. She then became Mission Director in India, and as her deputy, I had my office next to hers, lived two houses down from her, carpooled with her to work, and probably spent more time with her than with Lynn. After my tour in India, she supported

me for the Mission Director job in Indonesia—AID/Washington had me temporarily headed to the Philippines until she intervened. And then, after my time in Indonesia, from her new job in the bureau looking after the former Soviet Union, she helped me get the assignment in Russia.

*Q: Now Linda Morris, was she in personnel? She's not related to—?*

MYERS: No, no. Linda Morse was a very powerful public health officer who became the Deputy Administrator for Europe and Eurasia and then Assistant Administrator for Global Health. She was one of the most dynamic personalities in USAID—an intellectual force and a strong leader. She also cared deeply about her staff, particularly the foreign service nationals.

*Q: Well, so then you ended up in Senegal. And Lynn was happy with that?*

MYERS: Yes, it turned out to be a great family post. Our kids were young, and lots of other families were there. Senegal was an easy place to live. Dakar was like a quiet, provincial town. It was less exciting from a development standpoint because we had limited resources to work with, but it was a lovely place to live.

*Q: You were not a private enterprise—?*

MYERS: No. There, I was a project development officer. And again, when you asked if I missed anything by joining IRRC, I did. I didn't know what a project development officer did, really. I didn't know what my job was. But there was an opening there, and it was a good family post, and so I took it. And fortunately, I had Bill Hammink as my deputy. Bill was one of the best project development officers in AID. He could do anything, as he has shown in his subsequent mission directorships. He went on to become Mission Director in Ethiopia, Sudan, India and Afghanistan, ending his career as AA for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And we recruited David Robinson, also an excellent PDO who had worked in Indonesia. We were just beginning to use word processors in the office, and Dave was one of the first who knew what he was doing. I'd never have been able to draft a project paper without his help getting it produced.

*Q: So you learned on the job?*

MYERS: I learned on the job and had a chance to work with some great people. Tony Schwarzwaldler had told me that the most important lesson he learned when he became Bangladesh's first mission director was the importance of building a team. He spent the first six months of his tour recruiting, and then was able to benefit the rest of his stay from the work of his team. I felt something similar in Dakar--having Bill and David in the office made life much easier.

The office ended up doing both project development and managing a series of private sector and small business projects which had no other logical home in the mission. We worked with Wayne Nilsestuen who headed the agriculture office on a design for

agriculture research. We had some fascinating small-scale experiments—dried mango operations and local business consulting, which were intriguing for their potential but had limited success. Our greatest success was the rural credit project Bill ran which established a rural bank ACEP (Credit Agency for Private Enterprise Credit) making small business loans. Nic Rolfe, a cooperative expert from New Jersey via Chile, took a failing lending operation and turned it into a self-sustaining, commercial bank with branches across Senegal. Some 30 years later, while visiting our daughter Anna in Cameroon, we were surprised to discover a sign for ACEP in a small town in the north. It turned out that ACEP had expanded to Madagascar in 1995, Cameroon in 1999, and is now one of the largest microfinance networks in Africa with branches in Niger and Burkina Faso as well.

We also had some spectacular failures, like a solar power pilot, launched by a Belgian, whom the then-Mission Director had met at a cocktail party. The Director was as enthusiastic about the project as we were dubious. Fortunately, a Lewis and Clark student intern, Sara Rasmussen Tall, already skeptical about the US government, agreed to take a look at the project. She discovered the Belgian was employing both his wife and mistress and furnishing his house at USAID expense. We reported him to the Inspector General (IG), he was jailed, and the project shut down. Perhaps most significantly, it was the beginning of Sara's continuing career in development and my introduction to the IG and its importance to project and program management.

The experience in Senegal, watching how a small mission is run and operated and seeing the role of personality in management styles, taught me a number of lessons. One was importance of strategy to frame your program and to protect against distractions. There are so many interesting possibilities in development, and we are often attracted to what Scott Spangler called one time, "our pet rocks," shiny objects with limited scalability or potential for replication. We had several in Senegal. The interest in the solar project was one. The Mission Director's love of water buffalo was another. She had seen the role of water buffalo power in her last post, Sri Lanka, and she hoped that we could revolutionize rice culture in the Fleuve, the Senegal River valley in the north, by importing water buffalo. It was an inspired failure that illustrated the importance of strategy and the dangers of micro-management.

We get attracted to development work because of its possibilities for change. As we rise in management, there's still the temptation of pet projects, the inspired idea that can produce major change. I felt the temptation later through my career, and remembering the water buffalo project served as a useful reminder of the dangers of trying to impose my inspiration on staff. Also, the advantages of having a strategy to set parameters. If we'd stuck to our strategy, neither the solar project nor the water buffalo would have qualified.

And once again, the failures brought home the importance of culture—villagers weren't geared up to protect solar panels, young boys in the Fleuve weren't drawn to buffalo the way they were in Sri Lanka.

Fortunately, there was good mentoring from the Mission's deputy directors. George

Carner, who was our deputy director when I first got there, followed by Gary Nelson.

And the personal side of life in Dakar was rewarding. Senegal was an easy place to get around with fascinating history and culture, and a wealth of variation in Islam. Senegal's Sufi Muslim brotherhoods are distinctive, blending local culture and Islam. Village life was accessible as were our counterparts. One example, USAID and the World Bank joined forces for a soccer match against the Ministry of Finance. The Finance Minister was their center forward.

The international community was close. We spent time together as families, at the beach, visiting villages and national parks, and exploring the country. I headed the school board as we built a new school along the edge of the Corniche. The job taught me a great deal about running committee meetings which stood me in good stead later in USAID. And something about local politics as well. When we were considering scholarships at the school, the first to ask for one was the Minister of Finance; we decided that administering a scholarship program might be too difficult.

*Q: How was your French?*

MYERS: My French got better; maybe Mme. Geary would have been surprised. I had a little French refresher training while we were in Arlington waiting for baby Laura's arrival, and in Dakar, we tried to hold our office meetings in French. We had nine Senegalese in the office.

*Q: On that note about the Foreign Service Nationals, how influential were the Senegalese in that office? They'd been there presumably for a lot longer than any of you had been there. Did they play a major role, or were they mostly support roles?*

MYERS: Several played major roles. One, Mamadou Khan, led project designs--he was a professional project development officer. Another, Mamadou Diarra, did anything related to training and was training officer for the mission. So I would say three or four of ten Senegalese in our office were professional level, 10s, 11s or 12s in rank, and able to do much of whatever an American could do. They played powerful role, although not as powerful as in places like India where they run the technical show.

*Q: OK, well I think maybe we've spent over two hours in this discussion, which has been fascinating for me. But I don't want to exhaust you.*

*Q: This is Alex Shakow, and I'm at ADST, sitting with Terry Myers, who is now about to embark on the second of our sessions to talk about this wonderful career that he has had.*

*We left off at a point that is, more or less, at the end of his period as a project development office in Dakar, Senegal at about 1991. But on further reflection, Terry has some thoughts that maybe relate to even an earlier period that we don't want to miss out on. So I'm going to ask him to go back before we move from Senegal to Washington, and then beyond to Russia and other such things.*

*So, Terry, if you'd like to pick up on one or two or three, or whatever the number of things are, that you have managed in your period since we had our first session to focus on those things that you think are particularly important that we did not, we should not, neglect. That's what I would like to do right now.*

MYERS: Well, thank you, Alex. One of the challenges of doing an oral history at my age is that I can't remember exactly what we covered in our last meeting.

*Q: You're not alone in that, so don't feel at all—*

MYERS: We're going to have some repetition, but I wanted to highlight a couple of points: first, the spirit of the times when I joined AID; the early hopes of new and appropriate technologies; and then the importance of institutional linkages to AID's early work.

In reminiscing about the days when I joined AID, I feel grateful for the optimistic sense of possibility (and perhaps naivete) we had. There seemed a confluence of interest among academics, foundations, politicians, policy makers and practitioners in the new discipline of development. There was a shared hope that development could make a difference which drew top thinkers from foundations like Ford and Rockefeller and universities to operational institutions like the World Bank and AID.

They were influenced by the hopes arising from newly independent African countries, changes in South Asia, and progress in Korea and Taiwan. And technology emerging in agriculture and health and family planning added to the sense of possibility.

A new development profession was emerging. Academics were moving into development, economists were specializing, and philanthropic and government institutions were financing research and training professionals for what was evolving as a new discipline. Foundations were launching pilot projects, studies, and supporting local organizations; their experiments could then be picked up by the national and multinational organizations.

*Q: Would you like to give an example or two of the things that were so exciting from that standpoint for you?*

MYERS: Well, when I first arrived at AID in 1969, I was walking through the State Department building where AID was housed in those days, and was struck by seeing Hollis Chenery's name outside AID's Policy Planning office. Hollis was one of the great early development economists--we had all read his theories in graduate school. A. O. Hirschman, another great thinker, had written his classic, Development Projects Observed, analyzing the nature of foreign assistance. David Bell, the head of Ford Foundation, had been drawn down from New York to become AID's administrator, and top academics like John Lewis at Princeton were recruited as Mission Directors.

And a number of times, people within AID worked to keep this spirit alive. I mentioned Herb Rees' seminar which encouraged us to reach back to academia and keep ourselves up-to-date on the latest thinking. Eric Griffel had an all day workshop in Dacca on nutrition and the possibilities of fortification. Fran Gulick, a USAID nutritionist, was there. And I think her husband, Clarence, might have been there. Clarence was again one of the great names in AID. Haven (W. Haven North) did an excellent oral history of Clarence, which was quite interesting.

And Clarence in his oral history talks about John Lewis, who was a professor at Princeton who'd gone on to be the mission director—

*Q: In India.*

MYERS: —in India. So this was a time when academics were interested in development, and AID was a laboratory for their theories. We were interested in the academics, both because their ideas, and because they could train the people we needed.

*Q: And so the academics were not too academic? And you operators were able to blend in and take from them some theoretical basis for what you were trying to do?*

MYERS: Well, I think so. Princeton Lyman comes to mind. I'd read articles by Princeton when I was at Fletcher--he was the father of AID's work on Title IX (Title IX of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1966), and one of the first people to argue that we should be doing political development.

Now this was very early in the thinking about building political institutions and the importance of civil society organizations, and the role that AID might play in supporting political infrastructure.

It was exciting to come to AID and find Princeton himself, in person, available to counsel us on political development. (He also counseled us young officers in our fledgling group, Foreign Service Officers Against the War, organized to protest against the Vietnam War.) Princeton is, I think, a good example of somebody who was a practitioner, a thinker, a scholar, and a terrific leader. He went on to join State, become Ambassador to both Nigeria and South Africa, and, in his 80s, lead efforts to make peace in Sudan.

*Q: Right, so he bridged several different worlds there very nicely.*

MYERS: People like Princeton were early heroes. I remember hearing in Eric's Dacca seminar about Alan Berg's work on fortification to improve nutrition. We were impressed by the potential of new and appropriate technologies. The time in East Pakistan became overwhelmed by the cyclone and civil war, but there were a number of impressive experiments relating to development going on under the auspices of the National Academy of Science (Sciences)—

*Q: The U.S. National Academy of Science (Sciences).*

MYERS: —the U.S. National Academy of Science (Sciences) was interested in developing appropriate technologies. This was the age of appropriate technologies and “small is beautiful”.

*Q: But we're still talking about when?*

MYERS: This was '69, '70, '71.

*Q: May have even been a little bit before “small is beautiful”.*

MYERS: A wonderful guy named Noel Vietmeyer, a New Zealander, worked for the National Academy and visited Dacca with a wealth of ideas--small storage facilities out of ferrocement, which could be hermetically sealed, to kill pests by suffocating them and reduce post-harvest losses; ferrocement boats because Bangladesh didn't have a lot of wood; a Volkswagen beetle engine-driven rig to clear waterways of the invasive water hyacinth (imported by some British colonial officer's wife to decorate the lily pond in her backyard) and turn it into buffalo feed; a hand-operated machine to compress rice husks to bricks for housing. Lots of hopeful experiments.

*Q: So these are very practical, pragmatic—*

MYERS: Practical ideas, worthy of testing.

*Q: Low-cost.*

MYERS: And the technology can drive change. And the relationship of various levels of technology to farmer organization was really interesting. We had a big debate going on between the (World) Bank and ourselves. The Bank wanted to build large, high-technology, deep-water wells. And John Thomas with the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) was looking at small, hand-drilled wells, using local materials.

We did studies to see what the impact would be on the farmer organization. Even in Bangladesh, a country awash with water, wells are critical in the highland areas, and their operation and water allocation becomes highly political--well operators because of their power become much sought-after marriage material. Conflicts often arise, and smaller groups may be easier to manage than larger groups. The studies impressed me with the importance of understanding context, culture and local politics and the extent to which we in AID could benefit from more sociology and anthropology.

*Q: This subject is very relevant, even today, because AID has this lab—*

MYERS: The Global Development Lab.

*Q: And there was a discussion just yesterday with the USAID Alumni Association with a*

*guy who was, I guess, the acting head of it.*

*But this very subject was coming up as to whether the Millennial Generation, that has no experience in development but brilliant people who come from Silicon Valley, are able to understand the sociology of some of these new technologies.*

*And we have been discussing whether it makes sense maybe to get a few people who can tell the kind of stories that you're telling, about the beginnings of some of the uses of technology at this level, to these people who think in grandiose terms about the major radical changes in technology. And whether the sensitivity to just the kind of issue you're talking about on the social and anthropological side might not be an edifying experience for this younger generation.*

MYERS: You want to keep those people in. They have a lot of ideas, enthusiasm, energy, entrepreneurial spirit, and a remarkable access to capital. I've been watching a project in Kibera, the slum in Nairobi, in which a group from Silicon Valley has been working to develop a center for clean water and sanitation. They've had money; they've had architects; they've had everything. But the greatest challenge, of course, has been local politics and a lot of anthropological, political science context. They're powerful and committed, and they're powering through, but they are outsiders and could have used more background on the political and cultural context.

It's an interesting challenge for the Global Development Lab. Match money and technology to a problem. Bring them in, acculturate them, and work together with them.

*Q: Well, that's exactly what this guy is focused on. So, we may find a way to draw you in on that, too. Anyway, all right, well let's back to the business.*

MYERS: Noel's work was really a precursor to the type of work that the Lab is attempting now. I don't know what happened to all of Noel's ideas, but the same thing was happening with the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL) in Matlab Bazaar where research was being matched to need. A CRL doctor, Al Sommer, came up with the idea of fortifying for vitamin A deficiency.

*Q: Is that where the original effort at fortification came from?*

MYERS: That was my understanding. That's where Al began to formulate the ideas, which led him to become the sort of father of micronutrient fortification to get at vitamin A deficiency.

I know that we were talking about iodine and salt, and fortification of wheat, and things that you could do for products, which had widespread circulation.

*Q: Did you have any CRSPs (Collaborative Research Support Programs) in the work? You know, these—*

MYERS: Yeah, yeah, I remember. I seem to remember watermelon CRSPs in Indonesia.

*Q: But in Bangladesh, this was before the days of CRSPs?*

*The CRSPs, by the way, for those who may be looking at this or reading this, were collaborative arrangements with universities, in both developing countries and American universities, in a way that were focused around a very discrete thing. In your case, watermelons. And the merits of it, usually crops, where there was a need for transfer of technology, but in a way that engaged the training.*

*And even yesterday, we were talking about whether this is a model that would work today or not. I don't know.*

MYERS: It goes back to the land-grant model which worked so well in launching and sustaining the Green Revolution. One of my first field trips in E. Pakistan was to Mymensingh to look at the work being done by three or four professors from, I think, Michigan State (University). And it introduced me to the long-term linkages between universities and local institutions which were at the heart of the Green Revolution. In India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and Indonesia, we had long-term programs developing faculties, posting US professors to host universities, and sending participants for masters and Ph.Ds. The participants would come back, sometimes bringing professors back with them for short-term assignments or hosting American graduate students.

These built long-term relationships, established capacity in country, sometimes produced unintended consequences--somebody told me that most of—half of—the entomologists in the U.S. have South Asian background.

*Q: Which they got through this kind of—*

MYERS: This linkage. Institutional linkages have been important in AID's work. Earlier we touched on with the Harvard linkage in Indonesia. Harvard had had a unit within the Ministry of Finance called the Policy Implementation Unit to do just what its name implied—look at the problems of implementing policy reforms. Working closely with the Indonesians, under the aegis of the Minister, they were looking at everything from tax policy and pensions, to the stock exchange and customs. Harvard faculty would come out for a year or two. Indonesians would study at Harvard. Some Harvard Professors would come on short-term assignments. Graduate students would come to Jakarta for their research. I think Larry (Lawrence) Summers (later President of Harvard and Treasury Secretary) was one of the early graduate students. Steve Radelet (later USAID Senior Economist) worked out there in Indonesia. There were a number of very good US economists who spent time in Indonesia.

*Q: Under the auspices of the Harvard Development Advisory Service, or what it changed its name to.*

MYERS: Harvard International Institute for Development (HIID). Very close

relationship. And there was a similar relationship between the Food Policy Institute at Stanford (University) with Wally Falcon (Walter P. Falcon).

*Q: The Food Policy Institute, yes.*

MYERS: Which was done away with by Condoleezza Rice when she was provost--academic economics had become more and more quantified and less policy-oriented.

*Q: Yeah, that's where Peter Timmer and Wally—*

MYERS: Wally Falcon, Peter Timmer, Carl Gotch. Terrific thinkers, who built up a relationship with key Bureau of Logistics (BULOG) and Ministry of Agriculture officials in Indonesia over a 30-year period.

*Q: Yeah, just to tell you that my experience in the late 1960s, when I was for a few months acting director—acting mission director—in Jakarta, and negotiating PL-480 (Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 or “Food for Peace”) agreements with the Indonesian government, it was quite a surprise to find Peter Timmer and there was another of the Stanford group on the Indonesian side of the table.*

MYERS: Oh, that's great!

*Q: That was just part of the way in which business was transacted in those days. It was a little surprising, but it was for the better, I guess, in the long run.*

*We're getting far afield from where we ought to be.*

MYERS: Oh no, but that brings up a great question that we might address later--for whom does a USAID-funded technical consultant to a host government really work? AID's paying for him, but we're hiring him for the government as a senior advisor. Does he work for the government or does he work for us? This became a point of some contention during my later tour in Indonesia as Mission Director after the Asian financial crisis, when the US Ambassador wanted to have all of the technical advisors we had working with the Indonesian government meet with his economic or political officers before (and after) meeting a senior Indonesian official to ensure what they were saying corresponded with US policy.

*Q: Oh, that's very—that's really something. Well, we'll come to that. Remember that one.*

*All right, so is it time to move on from these wonderful and interesting things that we've been discussing and talk about your career move then?*

*So you finished up in Senegal and then were dragged back to Washington. Were you happy to go back to Washington in 1991, or was this against your will? You just had to—*

MYERS: No, I came back because we hadn't lived much in the States, and it was time to

get back. I hadn't really worked for AID in Washington, except for the year on the Nepal Desk almost 20 years earlier—

*Q: So which job did you come to?*

MYERS: Well, I had met Warren Weinstein in Indonesia when he had come out on a field visit. Warren was one of AID's great outside-the-box thinkers, a bureaucratic entrepreneur and a polyglot to boot. He spoke 14 languages. When he came to Indonesia, within a week he was speaking Indonesian. I asked him how he did it. He said, "It's easy. It's got Dutch. It's got Arabic. It's no problem at all."

He was in charge of the Africa Bureau's private sector office and brought me back to work for him.

Warren, unfortunately, later became a business advisor in Karachi where he was kidnapped and eventually died in a—

*Q: An attack by an American bomb.*

MYERS: —attack by an American drone strike in Waziristan, Pakistan. A real tragedy for a remarkable character.

I came back to work with Warren in the private sector office. We were doing everything from venture capital, to business training, to advice to central banks—

*Q: Did you find adaptation to Washington hard after being in the field?*

MYERS: Well, there were a lot of family transitions because this was the kids' first time in American schools and an American neighborhood. Trying to get re-integrated was challenging. They didn't have any friends. How do you adjust? Most of the kids in their classes already had their circle of friends and established or absorbed a common culture. Our kids had little TV overseas and a different set of cultural references, even vocabulary.

Living overseas with kids is like living in a small town. Everybody goes to the same school. Everybody has the same teachers, and most of us work in the same business, doing development or working on relations between our countries and the host country. We saw each other at meetings, socially, and on family trips together on the weekends.

So, we were moving them from that small town environment to a much more fluid situation. It took some adjustment.

In terms of work, it wasn't the best match. IRRC had given me a chance to talk to a lot of business people and to get a feel for business. That was helpful. I had some feel for Congress because during my time at IRRC, I had gone up on the Hill to run some hearings for Senator Dick Clark (D-Iowa) on foreign investment in South Africa under

apartheid. So, I had some feel for both the politics and the benefits and risks of enticing of business to get more active in Africa. But I didn't really have a vision of what was possible or how to get there, and I didn't enjoy it that much. The action seemed to be in the field.

*Q: Did AID have the tools that—I mean, normally you'd think of AID being particularly focused on government-to-government arrangements, and the culture is more of that kind. So, did you find that, as a private sector officer or private whatever-your-title-was, I guess that was it, that you were kind of constrained just by the culture in which you were working?*

MYERS: Oh, there were some definite constraints and some things that I'd felt uncomfortable with, and a number of areas where I felt we didn't really know what we were doing. We were feeling our way along.

As an example, we had a venture capital—an enterprise--fund. I've always been a little skeptical of enterprise funds, and I don't think AID really knows how to handle them. I think that the private sector can make a judgment better than we (USAID) can as to whether they should be investing in start-ups. And our Africa enterprise fund finally ended up investing largely in hotels and extractive industries. That stuff, the private sector can do this on its own. It doesn't really need AID for that. I thought we did better with our more traditional approaches such institution building—working with African Central Banks to provide technical assistance on capacity building and policy reform, for example.

Warren was very entrepreneurial. And we did run into some restrictions. I came in one day to find his office closed off with yellow tape. And the IG had closed down his office for a while. I'm not sure what was at the root of their concerns, but not long after that, he went off to the IFC (International Finance Corporation), where I think he was less constrained. I don't think anything came of the IG investigation, but we definitely had people looking over our shoulders.

At the same time, there were aspects of the job that were really fun. We were in a big office with technical support in agriculture that Tom Hobgood was running. Democracy and governance for Africa that Jennifer Windsor and Bill Hammink were working on. Economics with Jerry Wolgin and Jay Smith. It was a good group of people working on aspects of—

*Q: So these were colleagues all reporting to the same assistant administrator?*

MYERS: We were all part of the technical support office in the Africa Bureau, reporting to Scott (M.) Spangler, who was the Assistant Administrator for Africa. Scott came from the private sector, but had lived and worked in Africa and had a long-standing interest in development. He ended up owning a major part of Chemonics (Chemonics International, Inc.) and was chairman of its board.

*Q: That's right. That's right.*

MYERS: There was good leadership at the top. Scott had a special assistant named Sam Shoen, who had worked with U-Haul in Arizona, and encouraged entrepreneurial thinking. Larry Sayers, then deputy assistant administrator, brought strong intellectual leadership to the bureau. He set up and chaired a series of seminars. Steve Brent, formerly on Senator Nancy Kassebaum's staff, later a colleague at the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces (now Eisenhower School), was also active in the seminars which gave us a chance to talk about what it would take to kick-start development in Africa. It was like being in graduate school with academics, practitioners and policy wonks at the table. Larry brought in outside speakers to keep us pumped up. He mentored me by taking me to lunch a couple of times. Here was the deputy assistant administrator, while I was way down in the bowels of a technical office, and he was reaching down and making me recognized. I was impressed by his management.

*Q: So how was it that you became the Russia desk officer, which is what happened after about a year or two after?*

MYERS: It was luck. I'd been interested in Russia for a long time. My college roommate, Dick Beahrs, who, as I mentioned before, had been Berkeley's student body president during some of the toughest times, had, during his career at Time-Warner, become interested in development. He'd visited us in most of our overseas posts and had seen a number of our projects. He had stayed active at Berkeley and had become a member of the advisory board for the College of Natural Resources at Berkeley.

Berkeley, as things began to change in the Soviet Union, became interested in a relationship with Pushchino, a state university in a small town, about 90 kilometers south of Moscow, which had been one of two centers for microbiology research in the Soviet Union. In January 1992, Berkeley's College of Natural Resources was taking a team over to see about a linkage with Pushchino, and Dick asked if I could join the group.

*Q: But this was—So, you were working for AID?*

MYERS: I was still working for the Africa Bureau, but was able to get permission from USAID to make the trip. We visited Moscow briefly but spent most of our four days in Pushchino, in what had previously been a city closed to foreigners. The scientists there were excited by the connection to Berkeley and the US. We were too.

My switch to Russia illustrates how fluid the personnel process can be in a bureaucracy and just how responsive USAID can be when it needs to be. In Washington particularly, where positions are opening up all the time, the switching jobs is always possible and remarkably acceptable; personal networks are important, and the need to move between jobs is understood—everyone recognizes the urgency of filling certain positions, and people are generally understanding (and forgiving) when people request transfers for professional—or even personal—reasons. The changes can be quick.

Just after getting back from the Berkeley trip to Russia, I was in the lunch line one day with Brian Kline, who had been my boss in the Africa Bureau but had moved on. I asked him what he was doing, and he said, “Well, I’m heading up the office that handles Kazakhstan, Armenia, Ukraine, and Russia, and we’re looking for desk officers. Do you want to be desk officer for Kazakhstan or Russia?” I said Russia and was assigned to the Russia desk shortly thereafter, sharing a room in the old State Department building with Richard Frankel handling Armenia and Tom Eamy handling Kazakhstan and Central Asia. We were cheek by jowl, listening in on each other’s phone conversations, sitting in each other’s meetings, and learning, by osmosis, the issues each of us was dealing with. It made it easier when we needed to fill in for each other. I ended up as desk officer for Armenia as well as Russia for a while and worked briefly in Ukraine on a program strategy.

*Q: Were you the first desk officer for Russia?*

MYERS: Elizabeth Kvitashvili had been acting desk officer as AID was beginning a humanitarian assistance program just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She really was the first.

*Q: When did AID first-- I mean, when was it invited in to play a role in Russia?*

MYERS: Well, we had, I think, an OFDA (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) role after the Armenian earthquakes in—what was it—’88.

*Q: That was still during the Soviet Union days.*

MYERS: Still during the Soviet Union days. And then, when the humanitarian crisis hit— They had a real food crisis in 1991, Gorbachev invited us in, and we became involved in humanitarian assistance.

I’m not sure when the decision was made to set up an AID mission. It was somewhere between August of 1991 and May of ’92.

*Q: And when did you start in—*

MYERS: I started in June of ’92. Jim Norris had just been named as the first mission director. He came in from Pakistan, and I joined him on his rounds of the support offices. We met with management, finance, technical offices, everybody in Washington, about setting up a new mission in Moscow, what he was going to need, and how we were going to get it. We had no idea where we were going to be putting people, what the housing was going to be like, what crises we were going to face. We knew nothing about what life in Russia was like.

The only people in town who did were the CIA. The CIA at that time was looking for clients because they had 200 people doing research on Russia, or on the old Soviet

Union, which now no longer existed. They were looking for people—new customers—who needed their services. And they were delighted to be invited to talk to us about privatization, corruption, emerging leaders, the political situation, and what our role might be. I remember asking them about the greatest danger for our people posted to Moscow.

They said, “Well, probably slipping on the ice.”

*Q: (chuckles) What was the—I mean, you’ve got all these administrative details of setting up in a place you’re not familiar with. But two questions in particular: One is, what kind of a program were the Russians interested in? And how difficult was it to find people, whose entire careers were in traditional developing countries, to work in a setting that is so different?*

MYERS: First, the Russians were interested in everything, and second, we had almost no one with experience in the region. We didn’t have a lot of Russian speakers on hand. I think the one Russian speaker that we had was George Deakin who went to Moscow as a PSC (personal services contractor) for a short-term assignment and then ended up staying three or four years--beginning a career that ended with his becoming a Mission Director in Almaty and Delhi.

*Q: But Russian is one thing. But we didn’t have experience, in that kind of setting?*

MYERS: No, we didn’t. We really were feeling our way along. No one knew what to do. No one had experience in a transition of this nature, and yet everyone was interested in being involved. There was no end to meetings in Washington of think tanks and donors trying to figure out what should be done. Everyone wanted to do something.

*Q: And what did Russia want?*

MYERS: Russia, you know, was pretty confused itself during this period. This was the Yeltsin period. They had very ambitious young reformers like Yegor Gaidar, an economist and Yeltsin’s Deputy Prime Minister, and Boris Nemtsov, at 32, boy governor of Nizhny Novgorod, later, briefly, Deputy Prime Minister under Yeltsin, and then leader of the opposition to Putin, assassinated in 2015. They wanted help on everything. Just absolutely everything. They were open for advice, and it was a good time to be in the advice-giving business.

USAID had people helping turn the state-owned newspapers into private newspapers. Private radio stations. Privatization of companies. Introduction of a stock exchange, energy conservation and district heating, fiscal decentralization and local government, support for environmental groups, development of independent labor unions, agriculture cooperatives, micro-credit, judicial reform and court management—you name it.

*Q: And so were you responsible for finding the people who could be sent out to help with those kinds of privatization efforts?*

MYERS: As desk officer, I was just liaison for the mission in Washington, trying to represent their interests, to let them know what was available, and what everyone in Washington was thinking of doing for them, the political context. I talked to Jim's deputy, Bob Burke, regularly, two or three times a week, and saw my job as being the Washington extension of the Moscow mission.

USAID had set up a task force for the Newly Independent States (NIS) which included offices of humanitarian assistance, democracy and governance, agriculture, economic reform, health, private sector development. Eventually, the NIS task force became a bureau (Eastern Europe and Eurasia). The desk coordinated with all of the technical offices, the program office—led by Carlos Pascual, and with bureau leadership.

And to respond to the urgency and cope with the flood of interest and resources, the task force developed a process for technical assistance which, I think, ultimately destroyed what had been USAID's lengthy, comprehensive process of project design and development, a process that could often take as much as two years between concept and delivery of assistance. Because we were in such a hurry, the task force designed very general, indefinite quantity contracts that could be used to tap technical assistance for projects across the whole former Soviet Union. The awardees would compete on short notice for task orders.

*Q: And then was it the mission that was making the choices for that?*

MYERS: At least initially; most of the decision-making was in Washington with consultation with the field. The thought was that we could keep field missions lean, with the bulk of the technical expertise and policy making centered in Washington, available to field missions (some regional) in the Newly Independent States—Kiev, Yerevan, Moscow and Almaty. Washington would send out teams to assess needs and develop—with Mission staff--task orders which could then be sent out to contractors. Technical people back in Washington, at least for the first year or so, until the field missions were fully established and expanded, were making decisions as to who would go out to the missions and shaping programs. The various sections of the task force—health, economic growth, humanitarian assistance, democracy--were drawing from universities. They were drawing from US agencies: CDC, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the Fed (Federal Reserve), USDA, or the SEC. The Russians (or Ukrainians, Kazakhs, or Armenians) would like help with their central bank or stock exchange. The task force would provide experts.

*Q: Were there special contracts, procedures, which bypassed traditional or normal AID procurement regulations?*

MYERS: We had interagency agreements and large IQCs (Indefinite Quantity Contracts) with a whole bunch of subs (sub-contractors) on it. And the members of the NIS task force—and later mission staff once they were in place and settled--would do a task order. The task order would be fairly short and to-the-point; the NIS task force initially, but

gradually as the program built up, the mission, could draw from any of those subs which had been pre-approved to go out there.

And under the IQCs, the NIS task force fielded teams of contractors to work on fiscal decentralization, energy and making district heating facilities more efficient, technical assistance to civil society organizations, health, economic policy and education.

USAID was also trying help reformers in Russia and across the NIS shape political institutions. USAID had grants with the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI). Some NGOs, like IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board) which had been running exchange programs in the Soviet Union, had experience in the region. So we were starting—

*Q: Did you—*

We went looking all over for ideas on what we might do. We were meeting with think tanks, IMF and World Bank—most of Washington seemed to be interested in getting involved in the transition across the former Soviet Union. We even looked back at the Marshall Plan to see how that had been handled, what lessons might be learned.

*Q: And were there lessons?*

MYERS: Well, my favorite lesson didn't get accepted in the breadth I had hoped, but it supported the concept of exchanges and participant training. The Marshall Plan had brought teams combining business, labor, local government officials to the U.S. to visit small towns, factories and local governments to see how government, private business and civil society worked together. They then went back and worked as teams to develop new policies and programs in their towns.

We were never able to do anything of that magnitude. But we did a lot of exchanges and tried to establish linkages between US and Russian cities, hospitals, utility companies, even judges.

We had some successes and some real failures. We were trying to cut new programs out of whole cloth. The Russians were so busy trying to keep their heads above water that determining priorities wasn't easy. In some cases, counterparts were precise as to what they wanted. Others said, "Give us everything you've got. You know, we can use anything."

*Q: Were you responsible for coordinating with some of these actors: the World Bank and others? Or was this done mostly at the field level? Because we had so many actors.*

MYERS: For the first year, we didn't really have many people in the field. The task force built up in Washington while we were busy scrambling to staff up the mission, to recruit, orient, and provide logistical support for a new program. We were pulling people from Africa or from Asia.

*Q: But how did you decide that you would focus on “X” and the (World) Bank would focus on “Y”?*

MYERS: That’s a good question. Well, when Jim Norris arrived in Moscow after his Washington rounds, he was working on that. In Washington that work was being done well above the desk level, by Malcolm Butler as head of the task force, Larry Crandall and Barbara Turner as his deputies, and by Carlos Pascual in the Program Office, dealing with their counterparts at the Bank and in the interagency.

*Q: So you didn’t have to do that?*

MYERS: No, I was just the desk officer, coordinating and trying to keep track of logistics, recruiting, supporting, mundane things like clearances to get people out to the field. And then also, getting out there myself so that I could better understand the needs in the field and represent the mission in Washington. I made seven field trips to Russia in my two years on the desk.

*Q: And what did you do on the field trips?*

MYERS: I’d stand in for people, or I’d run around to see activities and meet contractors and counterparts, to find out what the Mission was doing or needed so I could do a better job on their behalf when I got back to Washington. I’d help the Mission set up visits from Washington or fill in, as on one lengthy TDY in 1993 as program officer.

A couple of trips I remember particularly captured the flavor of the moment. One was with Scott Spangler around the time of Bill Clinton’s election in November 1992. Scott started the trip as AID’s Chief Operating Officer but became Acting Administrator when Ron Roskens resigned mid-trip. Scott was then the most senior AID official to visit Russia, and Tom Rishoi, the Mission’s program officer, and I advanced a visit for him and Jim Norris to St. Petersburg. We must have met with the St. Petersburg government--Putin then deputy for (Mayor Anatoly) Sobchak at the time may have even been in the room—and some local businessmen and academics to set it up.

In any event, it was a most amazing day--November 7, 1992, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the (Russian) Revolution. We went to the Hermitage (Museum) for a special tour. As we were crossing Palace Square on our way to the Hermitage, snow began to fall. We passed crowds of people in black waving red flags—unreconstructed communists preparing to restage the attack.

*Q: A reenactment.*

MYERS: Yes. Once inside, on the second floor, through large windows, we watched the demonstrators march on the Hermitage, just as Kerensky might have watched from the same room 75 years earlier. That afternoon, we flew down to Moscow, just in time to go to the Kremlin for the premier of HBO’s docudrama on Stalin as invitees of my Berkeley

compatriot, Dick Beahrs, who was then president of Court Television.

As a sign of the times, the openness and hope for change, Court TV was in Moscow to film the trials of Communist Party leaders involved in the August 1991 coup attempt. Access was remarkable. Dick not only was able to film in the courtroom, but got xeroxed copies of evidence, including KGB head Beria's order in March 1940, complete with a margin note from Stalin, authorizing the Katyn Forest massacre of 22,000 Poles outside of Kiev.

HBO was launching their Stalin biopic with Robert Duvall which they had filmed on location with scenes in Lenin's Kremlin Office. Scott, Jim, and I went straight from the airport to the Central House of Cinema to join a crowd of 1,000 Russians watching a movie on Stalin's personal life unlike any shown in Russia before. Afterwards, we went to a vodka and caviar reception with not only Robert Duvall, but, standing next him, Stalin's grandson, looking somewhat peaked, with a pale green complexion and a cream-colored silk suit. It was just—

*Q: Other-worldly.*

MYERS: —as good as it gets.

It was mind-boggling, the changes taking place at that moment. And how little we knew or understood. Here we were thinking we would see the trial and conviction of communist leaders—they were all amnestied by the Duma (Parliament) in 1994. And Yegor Gaidar was saying, "We've got to privatize everything," and asking for our help. The possibilities seemed infinite, both for the private sector, for us as donors., and particularly for the Russians. And we have seen how things have gone.

We were very active in the privatization scheme. We had firms helping the Russians put together an advertising campaign for coupons that people could use to buy shares in the Red October Chocolate Factory or other state-owned enterprises.

*Q: Was AID at that time trying to amalgamate this information? Amalgamate is not the right word. To kind of learn from this as to—these were all quite unusual areas for AID to be working in. Did AID take advantage of this? Was anybody taking a step back, and looking at it? Or was it all just so high-pressure?*

MYERS: We were scrambling. We had a budget in '94 of more than a billion dollars for Russia and the former Soviet Union which we were trying to program. We were being pressed to be experimental, and there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the development of enterprise funds, funded by USAID but managed by executives borrowed from Wall Street. They would introduce the concept of venture capital to launch a private sector in what had been command economy and inspire both foreign and domestic investors. We were trying to move money and produce radical change so quickly. Russia was in such dire straits and the opportunities for major political and economic change seemed so great, there was a feeling of, "We just need to get on with it." There was little political

patience for long-term institution building through traditional technical assistance.

As with the African enterprise funds, enterprise funds for the former Soviet Union made me nervous. I preferred technical assistance for institution building. As it worked out, the enterprise funds—at least in Russia—were most successful in their investments in institutions—banks doing mortgage lending, credit cards, insurance and leasing companies. It took time after all—the success wasn't apparent for more than a decade. It was difficult to see the value added in areas like hotels and retail where the private sector was finding its way without USAID.

Brian Atwood's visit in the spring of 1993, shortly after he'd become USAID Administrator, captured both the adventure and the historical dimension of the moment. This was his first trip to his new "empire". We began in Ukraine with meetings in the mission which had just been opened with Terry McMahon as Mission Director, and then with the government—Leonid Kuchma was the Prime Minister, visits to Babi Yar where more than 30,000 Jews were killed by Nazis in 1941 and to Kiev's cathedrals to get a perspective on Ukraine's fundamental (and foundational) relationship to Russia.

Then we moved on to Moscow where we had a tour of everything from life in communal apartments and the operation of TV and radio stations to the new stock exchange and the lines outside the recently-launched McDonalds. One of our programs was helping develop housing for Russian military officers returning from the Baltics, as an incentive to get the Russian forces back home, and we were working with the Russians on privatization of apartments in Moscow. Rent for apartments were the same as they had been in 1929, something like 29 cents a month; there was no new construction, and certainly no private market.

*Q: It's like New York City and rent control there.*

MYERS: It was incredible, incredible. It was a chance to have real influence and to establish sustainable institutions. The work in housing was a good example. We had excellent advisors from the Urban Institute who had hired an impressive group of Russians from Moscow research institutes, often former scientists, who developed a program that privatized some 900,000 apartments in Moscow. Eventually, the Russians working with the program formed their own Institute of Urban Economics (IUE), which is still providing advice on urban policy to cities around Russia and the former Soviet Union.

Similarly, the work in strengthening local government produced a permanent Russian think tank. Roy Bahl from Georgia State headed a team working on fiscal decentralization and advising oblast (local) governments on tax policy. As with IUE, the Russians hired by Georgia State went on to set up their own organization—the Center for Fiscal Policy—which continues to consult today with central, regional and local government officials on financial management and fiscal policy. It is interesting that both—the Institute for Urban Economics and the Center for Fiscal Policy—were headed by women. Both offered a model of technical assistance and created critical legacy

institutions important not only for Russia, but with potential to help across the former Soviet Union. To establish them, USAID had called on US institutions—the Urban Institute and Georgia State—to respond to Russian requests for help in key policy areas. They hired talented Russians and stayed in Moscow for a couple of years until the Russians had been trained and had established a think tank, consulting firm, or institute on their own. The Americans then moved on, remaining in touch to provide advice as needed, but leaving a legacy institution.

*Q: Which is, I guess, the right pattern.*

MYERS: It was a successful model. We did something similar in a number of areas with civil society organizations, in health—Healthy Russia 2020, for example—and environment—the Fund for Sustainable Development. In some cases, we didn't need to start the organization—there were already Russian civil society organizations, particularly environmental groups and human rights organizations, which were already established, which we supported to expand and strengthen their operations.

*Q: Local groups?*

MYERS: Local.

*Q: With links to international NGOs?*

Some already had links. For example, the Moscow-Helsinki Group and Memorial, both early civil society organizations focused on human rights. After the 1975 Helsinki Accords, Russian activists formed the Moscow-Helsinki Group to monitor Russian compliance and report on human rights abuses. Memorial was established to capture the history of the Gulag and promote civil society and human rights. Both Memorial and Moscow-Helsinki had links to sister organizations in other countries of the former Soviet Union and both received international donor support.

*Q: You know, I probably should hold this question 'til the very end. But given the significance of this completely new area of activity for AID, in the sense of "new", meaning the former Soviet Union and that political environment, and so on—As you look back on that and you think about your subsequent career, was that a particularly significant or useful experience? Or was it kind of off-the-charts as being so different, such an unusual set of circumstances? But just without going into a lot of detail about that—*

MYERS: That's a great question and one I've been ruminating about since our last session. It seems to me that much of my career has been spent in environments of great confusion and great promise and great crises. Maybe that is just the nature of development work. Maybe there is no normal in development...much is unusual. East Pakistan was my real introduction to USAID, and we had a tidal wave, a civil war, a war of independence and a transition to a new government; Senegal and Indonesia, our first time around, could be considered more traditional development challenges, as could

India, but Indonesia in 1998 had a humanitarian crisis, a financial collapse, a major political transformation, minor rebellions in Aceh and Papua, ethnic and religious conflict, with a sideshow of rebellion, repression, and a successful struggle for independence in East Timor.

Russia presented a unique opportunity because of its remarkable state of development, literacy and institutions, although we didn't fully understand the role that culture, history and the corruption of its institutions might play in the transition. Burma with a state of development similar to Bangladesh, but a high level of literacy and thirst for new ideas similar to Russia's, presented its own set of problems. It is hard to say that Russia was more outside the box than Indonesia or Burma. The fact is, so much of what we try to do, involves major changes in deeply ingrained culture, shaped by history we often don't fully understand, involving institutions and political power relationships that resist reform. They all, with their crises and transitions, offer terrific challenges but incredible opportunities.

In graduate school we read A.O. Hirschman who, in Development Projects Observed described the principle of the "hiding hand." If we ever knew how difficult things were, we would never undertake them. We start projects without full knowledge of all the challenges ahead. Once we get started, we then find work-arounds as we encounter roadblocks. So, lucky for the "hiding hand." In each of these instances, the world community—the development community—has been naïve, overly optimistic, enthusiastic, driven—all of which has helped us dive in with the hope of achieving great things, and in many cases, when we have bumped up against something blocking progress, we have been able to overcome it. At the same time, many times we have had to weather deep disappointments and unmet expectations.

*Q: So there is a consistency in this.*

MYERS: There certainly has been a consistency of deep optimism (and naivete as well) in my career. It's always been exciting, you know. Development is a tremendously exciting field, but it carries its risks. Our work is like that of venture capitalists, only in development. We invest in a dozen experiments—half fail, two or three survive and are sustainable, and two or three take off and produce brilliant successes—the Green Revolution, health and family planning, micro-credit, participant training. We take calculated risks—there is simply too much we don't know or understand about the environment and culture in which we are working, and so we need time and flexibility and the capacity to monitor, evaluate, and recalibrate as we proceed.

To return to the stories from Brian's trip simply as an illustration of what the program was like in those days...After ducking into communal apartments on the way in from the airport, we visited the Moscow Mission next to the Embassy temporarily housed in what was called the Change Building—so named because it was where workers constructing the new embassy changed their clothes.

You might remember the story of the new embassy building. Originally, during the

1980s, the Embassy had constructed a building of five stories, but with materials that the Soviets had supplied, complete with electronic bugs. When the bugs were discovered, the Embassy knocked two floors off the building and then rebuilt, adding four more floors with Filipino and other imported, non-Russian, foreign labor. That was supposed to rectify the bugging problem, but even today, truly confidential work is restricted to the top four floors despite the fact that in 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, as a sign of our new relationship, the Russians gifted the original construction plans showing where the Soviets had placed all the bugs.

The Change Building was not particularly elegant, but was symbolic of the ad hoc nature of our operations. Foreign service officers for the Mission were being pulled out of Africa and Asia to serve in a region for which few were prepared—most needed to apply for a cold weather clothing allowance for the first time in their careers; almost none had language training. Moscow was dark, cold, and mysterious. Much was uncertain, even though the CIA had assured us that ice was likely to be the greatest danger we would face, you never knew exactly what was going to happen to you. Stories of being bugged and tailed were rife. We were feeling our way along.

Our confusion held true even at the highest level. We were having difficulties negotiating our overriding bilateral agreement with Russians to authorize the aid program. In fact, we never got it quite right, and for years the Russians told us they didn't necessarily recognize the agreement we claimed governed our work. It haunted us, particularly when Putin began to question the utility of our programs 15 years later.

*Q: But for years, you operated without a bilateral agreement.*

MYERS: The Russians said that the agreement was never accurately translated into Russian. And they hadn't signed it. But we operated with it.

Brian's time in Moscow included seeing what we were doing on officer housing, visiting the stock exchange, and giving an interview at a media project that Internews was supporting. The incongruity of it all was striking. The stock exchange, which was just opening up, had a bust of Lenin in the foyer overlooking the trading floor. I was able to pay \$10 in the subway for a "privatization" certificate entitling the bearer to 10,000 rubles worth of stock. The certificates were being distributed to all Russian citizens so that they could take part in the new economy, but most were too poor to use the certificates—they sold them to whoever would buy them, enabling future oligarchs (or plant managers) to scoop up vast quantities at rock-bottom prices.

We were flying on military transport and so had our own plane and were able to include on the flight to Nizhny Novgorod, Boris Nemtsov, who, as mentioned earlier, was then governor of Nizhny. He was introducing a remarkable range of reforms, privatizing small business and revamping local government and had a tight relationship with the IFC. He was inspirational and charismatic then. His luster faded subsequently as he confronted the challenges of being deputy to an increasingly erratic Yeltsin, but he remained courageous in his opposition to Putin until his 2015 assassination--a symbol of what might have been.

In Nizhny, we visited a nuclear submarine factory where two USAID-funded International Executive Service Corps volunteers were advising factory managers on how best to make the transition from building submarines to white goods like refrigerators. The catwalks high above the factory floor were rusted with holes, and the welders worked without masks. The factory showed years of deferred maintenance, and there certainly had been no Occupational Safety and Health inspectors.

Nemtsov hosted the visit. He had done his homework and had a list of ten things he wanted us to help him do. That night at dinner in a newly opened art-house cafe, he introduced us to a 26-year-old physicist (as he himself had been) who'd just started the first private bank in Nizhny and was about to open an insurance company. They both were eager for advice: "Just tell us how to do it." They knew clearly what they wanted to accomplish.

We then went to Almaty, where Craig Buck, as Mission Director for Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, had already set up an efficient operation. Almaty looked like a Soviet city air-dropped into Switzerland. We visited a museum showing the impact of Soviet nuclear testing, went up into the mountains, and saw a chair lift that gave new meaning to the term "chairlift" because it was literally a chair on a cable. It is hard to explain how strange it all seemed.

We flew on to Armenia then suffering under the Azeri-imposed oil embargo and experiencing an acute energy shortage. The country was dependent on what we thought a dangerously rickety nuclear reactor far from meeting requisite safety standards. Suzanne Olds, the mission director, fortunately had a house with a fireplace in Yerevan, but firewood was in short supply, and Yerevanites were attacking trees and park benches to keep the home fires burning. Life in Armenia was real tough in those times. It was cold and poor. As the Armenians told us—

*Q: I don't think it's any easier today.*

MYERS: No, it may not be. There were so many smart people. But as one Armenian said, "When God made the world, he used a sieve to sift out all the rocks and threw them into Armenia."

Still on the military transport plane, we took off from Yerevan relatively empty—we had intended to refuel in Yerevan, but hadn't been able to. We began to run out of gas. We thought we could land in southern Russia to refuel, but the Russians were not having us. We had to make an emergency landing in Tbilisi. And the people in Tbilisi were not expecting us.

When we hit the tarmac, Malcolm and Brian looked to me, as the junior officer, to figure out our next steps. I walked out of the airplane and signaled to people in the control tower, making a telephone sign with my fingers to ask where I could make a phone call. They invited me in and gave me a phone. I called the one hotel in town that I knew had

American consultants in it and asked the operator to give me the first American they could find. Fortunately, the person they found in the lobby was an AID contractor who then alerted the Embassy that the USAID Administrator was stranded at the airport.

The Embassy invited us downtown for a country team briefing on Georgia and then a tour of Tbilisi while the defense attaché negotiated with the Georgian mafia to get gas for the plane. Fortunately, the pilot was carrying \$10,000 in cash on the plane and was able to buy us enough to get us to Ramstein in Germany where we would refuel.

*Q: (chuckling) This was that “a day in the life of the desk officer.”*

MYERS: Being the desk officer was a great job!

At the time, I thought we might to be posted to Moscow. I really loved it and working in Russia was a great adventure. In the summer of 1993, I went to Moscow for a month TDY to stand in for Alan Reed in the program office, and Lynn, Nathaniel, Anna, and Laura came along as well.

We lived in an apartment across Kutuzovsky Bridge, about a ten-minute walk from the Embassy compound. When the kids were not in summer camp on the compound, Lynn, having memorized enough Cyrillic to decipher names of the stops, would take the kids around on the Russian metro. Russians, used to small families, were surprised to see a family of three non-Russian speaking kids, all under twelve, exploring the city with their mother.

*Q: Right.*

MYERS: Changes were rapid and visible, even to relatively ignorant outsiders. We watched as Ismailovo, the open city market, grew from a place where people emptied their attics to sell their heirlooms on tablecloths on the ground, to a market with card tables, and then with booths and stalls, eventually evolving to full-blown commercial structures. Of particular interest to Nathaniel, age 11, was Russia’s professional baseball team, the Moscow Red Devils. In a sign of the open cultural exchange, three Russians had been invited to play in US minor league ball; they even had their own baseball card. We wanted to see the Russians play. The visit pointed up the financial challenges they faced. We went to the stadium only to find that the game had been postponed for 45 minutes because the Canadian Embassy had paid \$150 cash to rent the field for their softball practice. When the cash-paying Canadians were through and the Red Devils took over, the Russians were extraordinarily frugal with their foul balls. When someone hit a foul ball or home run, the fans couldn’t keep the ball—Red Devil fielders would chase them down. Cash for new balls was scarce.

*Q: So did Lynn enjoy enough that summer in Moscow so that you wanted to go back there?*

MYERS: We came home thinking we would move to Moscow the following year as

Program Officer. But as luck would have it, I ran into Tim Mahoney in the State Department cafeteria. And Tim said, “You know, Walter Bollinger is coming in from India, and he’s looking for a deputy. Why don’t you have lunch with Walter?” So I had lunch with Walter.

*Q: Did you know Walter before that?*

MYERS: Yes, he’d been the assistant desk officer for T. Swayze on the Pakistan Desk when I first joined AID.

*Q: Oh, way back there, yes.*

MYERS: And he’d come out to East Pakistan one time, during a time of peace. I was his control officer and we’d had a good visit exploring the backwaters of Dacca in a small wooden rowboat.

And so, Lynn said, “Let’s think about that. In India, they speak English. In India, they’ve got eight or nine months of good weather. They’ve got a good school. In Moscow, it’s dark, they’ve got four months of good weather, and they don’t speak English. What’s the debate here?”

*Q: So that was why you decided to take up Walter’s offer?*

MYERS: Lynn made a persuasive argument. But to make the switch I needed Linda Morse’s support. Linda was the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East and had a different candidate for the India job. I needed to plead my case. And I needed to find someone to take the program slot in Moscow.

*Q: But was the mission director’s request not given the highest priority in those days?*

MYERS: It was important but not the final word. The Deputy Assistant Administrator played a key role—all the DAAs for bureaus would sit together in sort of an annual draft process—and so I had to ask Walter to call Linda.

*Q: I see. So it did work out.*

MYERS: It did work out for us and for Jim Norris in Moscow as well because he got one of the most brilliant people in AID, Emmy Simmons, to be the program officer and, as a bonus, he got Roger Simmons, as his deputy. A two-for-one package. He kept his OE (operating expenses) down while adding talent.

*Q: Well, and just on that note, since I had just recently carried on this interview—oral history interview with Emmy—*

MYERS: Oh, great!

*Q: —that Emmy, as I asked further questions of whether coming from a traditional developing-country background in Africa was an impediment to being accepted by the Russians.*

*And she stressed, “Listen, I was trained in Ethiopia with the strongest, Marxist regime there. We knew exactly what the situation was.” So she adapted very well.*

*Do you want to take a short break at this point?*

MYERS: Sure.

*Q: All right, here we are. We’re resuming. This is now the 27th of January, and I am resuming with Terry Myers after a very short break. And now what we’re going to be doing is moving to, with Terry and his family, to New Delhi, where he was the deputy mission director. We’re in 1994. So, tell me about the experience in India in those days.*

MYERS: Well, it was probably the family’s favorite post in terms of family activities. But you asked earlier what I lost by going to IRRC (Investor Responsibility Research Center), and I—

*Q: IRRC: Remember that for those of you who are not going back that far, this was the Investor Responsibility Research Center that Terry went to in 1972. Ten years.*

MYERS: And so I took a break from USAID for ten years which may be relevant to a lot of Millennials. Somebody told me the other day that Millennials appear more inclined to stay in AID for a couple of years, and then move on.

*Q: So, you were ahead of your time.*

MYERS: Yeah, but during that time away, I missed a lot of the guts of how you run an AID program. I’ve never been good on details anyway, and when I was assigned to be a deputy, the idea was daunting. I didn’t know what a controller did or how a contact office really operated. And I just—

*Q: Despite having been the desk officer for Russia, and having all those people.*

MYERS: The desk job emphasized networking and coordination, you know, rather than implementation and operations. As desk officer I could schmooze my way through. But moving paper was never my strength, and I was concerned by all the USAID policies and procedures I hadn’t mastered...I had lots of concerns.

*Q: So did you learn how to do that in New Delhi?*

MYERS: Well, I was afraid I was going to have to. But I was reassured by friends and colleagues who said, “You’ve got good people out there whose responsibility it is to make things happen. All you have to do is support them.”

I was worried particularly about budget and finance. A friend and colleague in the controller's office on the task force reassured me. "Well, you've got Curt Christensen who has been the head of worldwide—He knows his stuff. He's the best." And he was.

But when I got out there to ease my anxieties, I sat down with each of the office chiefs to learn what they were doing, what their problems were, and what they needed. Those conversations gave me some assurance that I could find a role for myself.

Walter (Bollinger) used me as an alter ego and provided a good model for management. My office was next to his. He had me join all of his meetings. I could watch him deal with office directors, consider problems and propose solutions. He was calm, elegant, professional, and competent. I learned a great deal.

India itself was a remarkable experience. At that time, the country was in the midst of a long period of what was called a Hindu rate of growth, plugging along but not fast enough to cut poverty. It was huge, unwieldy, with all the problems in the world. But also with some of the brightest people in the world.

And there were limits to our role. Early after our arrival, Walter mentioned the ambivalence that the Indians felt about USAID's being there with the stigma development assistance. Some didn't really want us at all. He advised that because our influence was likely to be limited and because India was so intrinsically interesting, we should just use our time there to do what we could, to learn, and to enjoy the experience.

He was right. India was—and continues to be—a fascinating place, with a wonderful history, rich culture, and myriad of problems and ideas.

*Q: Did you travel around a lot?*

MYERS: We traveled all the time. You can get on a train at night in Delhi, go to sleep, wake up the next day in the hills somewhere rich with history or nature. Indians are accessible, engaged, and, quite often, opinionated. The language makes it easier to interact and to feel part of the community, and my time in East Pakistan gave me a jump-start on the history. We were aided in this by starting our time in Delhi in West End next door to a three-generation Indian family household with remarkable stories of their own.

The father, Hari Shourie, then in his early 80s, had been a district commissioner in Lahore before coming to India at the time of partition. He founded India's Common Cause, an NGO fighting for consumer rights and tilting constantly at windmills before India's Supreme Court. He'd been a friend of Tim Mahoney, Program Officer in India before we got there, and Tim had told me to look him up. He turned out to be our neighbor and a window for me on Indian history, politics and culture.

His son Arun lived in the same house. A Ph.D. from Syracuse with a decade at the World Bank, Arun was editor of Indian Express who went on to become a member of

Parliament and Minister for Disinvestment, a critical spot as India began to break away from its state-dominated economic policies. His brother Deepak who had worked for India Today, the Time magazine of India, started a competitor, Outlook, and then went on to head BBC South Asia. Most importantly for us, his wife taught Bharatanatyam dance, and Laura got to be a dancing six of diamonds in her Alice in Wonderland production.

*Q: So these were your next-door neighbors?*

MYERS: These were our next-door neighbors, a remarkable family. Indian society was open and fluid and accessible to expatriates. And the international school included a number of Indian families (NRIs—non-resident Indians, Indians who had returned to India but with citizenship in the US, Australia or Europe) and provided a strong community bridge and an entrée to Indian society.

*Q: Was Walter correct in terms of there being very little interest in USAID and learning from the (United) States? Or were there areas which you think actually were appreciated and found useful by the Indian authorities?*

MYERS: Well, I think he was right about some political cabinet ministers and the skepticism among political elites, but as a result, we modified our program to target work at the state level or with NGOs interested in international support.

For example, we had an interesting family planning program in Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh with 200 million people, if it were an independent country, would have more people than most countries in the world. At that time, one out of every 39 people in the world was being born in Uttar Pradesh. Most stayed there! But women were having five, six, seven children, and they were eager for family planning. They were particularly interested in injections or implants or IUDs, family planning they could get without their husbands knowing about it.

*Q: Yeah.*

MYERS: And yet, at the same time, there were a number of elite Indians, including Indian women, who thought we were misdirecting our efforts. “The problem is not family planning, the problem is poverty. You have to work on poverty.” And, “You’re gender biased if you focus just on women.” They worked against expansion of family planning, particularly the use of hormonals--pills, injections and implants—for contraception.

So, there was a certain amount of elite opposition that I think Walter saw quite accurately as making it difficult for us to win support for our programs.

But at the state level, we found strong counterparts. In addition to family planning in U.P., we had dynamic and innovative HIV/AIDS programs in Maharashtra and in Tamil Nadu, for example--where state governments were much more interested. That was true as well in areas other than health and family planning. We had an interesting project in urban development in Ahmedabad. You may remember Kamran Khan, who came to

speak to the USAID Alumni on the Millennium Challenge Corporation several months ago as the MCC's Chief Operating Officer.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

MYERS: Kamran came to India on his first assignment with USAID's Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (RHUDO) and developed a particularly effective relationship with local leaders in Ahmedabad working to introduce India's first municipal bond to finance extension of electricity to neglected areas of the city. It was a model for bond finance across India.

*Q: Oh!*

MYERS: Ahmedabad had a young Municipal Commissioner who brought in a team of freshly minted MBAs as advisors and immediately took on a corrupt system of tax and customs collection. India was beset by a woefully inefficient system of octroi—local customs collected on goods being brought into a district. Collectors were pocketing the taxes collected. So the new Commissioner began to pay calls on the tax stations and, reputedly, took his bamboo lathi to the backsides of those collectors behaving badly. Within months he doubled the collections going to the city. He immediately used the money for visible improvement of infrastructure—streetlights—and then went to local businesses and said, "See, I'm lighting your streets. Now, give me money to pave them." And so he got the private sector to contribute. He encouraged public-private partnerships by saying, "We'll give you land. You make it into a municipal park. You create it and maintain it and you can put your name on it." Progress in Ahmedabad was obvious to all—freshly paved streets, new parks, well-lit streets.

Well, Kamran developed a relationship with him, and the city became a model for urban finance. RHUDO had other interesting, low-cost ideas for improving revenue. It linked several Indian cities to US counterparts with experience in cultural tours and encouraged city tourism by setting up "heritage" walks through old neighborhoods.

So, there were a number of areas in which we could have a real impact, although there were certainly officials difficult to work with.

*Q: And you had no difficulty with the—The central government did not oppose your working with the states?*

MYERS: No, but sometimes they were disinterested. A minister of health was particularly disinterested when we were trying to talk to him about HIV/AIDS. We said, "You've got some ten million people with HIV/AIDS. You're going to have 30 million in the future."

His reply was, "We've got more than a billion people; ten million is nothing." Just not interested.

*Q: Oh.*

MYERS: So, some politicians were not as sensitive to developmental issues as others—

*Q: Was this a traditional role for AID in India to work with the states, as opposed to focusing on national? I mean, as you say, the size of India is so great that a national program would be extraordinary in its—*

MYERS: I think the hope— You know, I should be able to answer that and to say what we had done previously in India but I don't know. Certainly in other places, like Indonesia, we worked at the provincial level and with local governments.

*Q: What about, there was a period where science and technology was the focus of efforts, I mean, when (Owen) Cylke was there. But I don't see that in your listing your priorities that you have anything—*

MYERS: Owen's era, with Tom Nicastro and Bob Beckman as private sector officers, was a decade earlier, if I remember correctly. We had still had some efforts relating to technology, but not with the emphasis in Owen's time. Dick Goldman's energy and environment office included work on new technologies—fuel cells, for example, and solar in rural areas and electric vehicles around the Taj.

*Q: The Taj Mahal?*

MYERS: The Taj Mahal, to cut pollution in Agra.

RHUDO produced a number of innovative ideas, one of the advantages of having a unit within the bureaucracy with its own rules and culture of innovation. Big bureaucracies, whether in companies or government, benefit from the periodic launch of new and somewhat independent units, like RHUDO, OTI, and the Global Lab, every few years to renew the larger bureaucracy--like the skunk works Lockheed made famous during World War II. RHUDO worked to bring new approaches to clean up the Ganges (River), by establishing settling ponds to capture pollutants. Ultimately, I think, like myriad efforts to help the Ganges, it failed, but I was impressed with its imagination and ambition.

We were working on mortgage lending and venture capital in Bombay and on economic policy reform with the Confederation of Indian Industry bringing out economists like Arnold Harberger and Ann Kruger for conferences with business and government leaders.

*Q: Mm-hm, yes.*

MYERS: (Joseph E.) Stiglitz came out as well. The idea was that India needed to wean itself off the Gandhian socialist model, to open its economy to greater competition and

foreign investment. India was just on the edge of major reforms in 1991, but things were beginning to change. and by '94, they were moving towards a more open economy under Manmohan Singh as Minister of Finance and Montek Singh Ahluwalia as his deputy. The leadership was sophisticated. I was ambivalent about our work—I wasn't sure that we, AID, needed to tell these guys about economic policy. The World Bank had already done its job—both Singhs were Bank alumni, as was Arun Shourie who, although considered by many a socialist, ended up leading a major effort to privatize.

*Q: Mm-hm. And the science and technology people were working again in individual activities?*

MYERS: I think it was smaller stuff. I think that under Owen (Cylke), we were doing venture capital work on science and technology.

*Q: Right. But, you know, that was not a feature of what you were doing then?*

MYERS: Not that I remember as being central to our programs. We had some residual activities in Mumbai with the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation for India.

*Q: Why did they have a humanitarian program in India at all in your day?*

MYERS: Oh, we had still had a large feeding program.

*Q: Title II (food aid), or—*

MYERS: Title II.

*Q: Run by NGOs?*

MYERS: CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) and CRS (Catholic Relief Services), doing school feeding.

There were certainly questions about why we were still doing food. We were arguing for local procurement but Congress, under pressure from the farm, bagging, and shipping lobbies, resisted. Our job was to try to get the food to the most needy areas and see that it was used most efficiently. We might have been able to do more if we had been able to by locally. There were fundamental concerns also, about the efficiency of distracting teachers with school feeding programs that diverted time from teaching to meal preparation. We had questions about the utility of turning teachers in to cooks.

But there were also broader questions about the need for continued aid to India. The best answers were simple--because there were still many areas in which India could still benefit from outside help. And India's important geopolitically, there were excellent counterparts, and the potential for impact was huge. If even one or two states in India would change their approach to HIV/AIDS, for example, it could have global impact. The same was true for economic reform. The hope was, of course, that what was done in one

state would be accepted somewhere else.

*Q: And in the case of the AIDS (HIV/AIDS) work, did you see evidence of that?*

MYERS: That would be worth looking at now. We had what looked to be excellent programs in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra and a good family planning program in Uttar Pradesh. It would be interesting to go back to evaluate them.

*Q: Yeah, it was pretty early in those days, of course.*

MYERS: But, for instance, in one area, we may be seeing changes now influenced by AID programs then. When Linda Morse came in as Mission Director after Walter, she came to an early conclusion that we should be working on violence against women. She ordered up an inventory of the violence against women being reported so that groups interested in attacking the problem would have a baseline. We launched a program to support NGO efforts with local law enforcement to assemble data on assaults and to produce an almanac to document violence annually and raise its visibility as an issue. Linda was one of the first to involve donors on an issue that continues to plague India today.

*Q: Was that something that the government, I guess, the federal government was sympathetic to? It sounded like an embarrassment to them.*

MYERS: I would guess it was an embarrassment. But there were civil society organizations that were very interested, concerned, and courageous. Your question about government reaction raises a fundamental issue: What is a donor's role? Who is AID working for? Who are we working for? Are we working for the government, or are we working for an elite bunch of politicians? Are we working for the people? The Congress? The US public?

*Q: And the answer to that question, Mr. Myers, is?*

MYERS: Well, I think the answer for most of us is that we're working for change. We're working for progress—to improve lives. And we're supporting people in government or civil society who are progressives in the broadest sense of the word. Our job is to help progressives figure out how to work around those opposed to change, to provide technical information or resources to help them make their case, test their ideas, and implement change.

And that's why we get kicked out of some countries.

Governments are not monolithic. They've got individual ministries that are well run, or individual people within badly run ministries who are working for change within those ministries, or visionary leaders in civil society working to influence policy or implement programs. I guess I see it as our job to identify and support the people who want reform. One challenge is avoiding our cultural bias, to identify the right counterparts and to

assess accurately what needs to be done —

*Q: And how well do you think that, at that point in India, that you were able to do that?*

MYERS: Oh, in U.P. (Uttar Pradesh), for instance, we had an absolutely fabulous partner—a former Indian civil service officer who had left government to head up the main family planning NGO that we were supporting. He knew what needed to be done, and he had the contacts and leadership skills to do it. On energy and environmental policy, we were, along with lots of other people, supporting a top notch research institute and (Rajendra Kumar) Pachauri, the international climate change guru and Nobel Prize recipient who has fallen into disrepute because of accusations of—

*Q: Personal harassment.*

MYERS: —personal harassment. And so, we had some good counterparts, some flawed counterparts. But an awful lot of talented counterparts. Our past work with the technical schools and agricultural universities was an example of what could happen when talent was identified and encouraged.

*Q: Were there university linkages still that had been started during these earlier years?*

MYERS: Not when we were there. The real work linking US land grant colleges with Indian institutions had been done in the 1950s and 60s. I had hoped to build on those links while some of the original participants were still alive. One of my dreams was to put together a conference for the universities, US and Indian, which had been linked to celebrate their past, discuss what had been achieved, and see if now, virtually, with new communications technology, we could renew those links. My enthusiasm was not shared—most thought that we'd moved beyond the need.

It wasn't the only grand idea that proved unrealistic. After learning that the Central Bank's rural credit program was deeply in debt, I had hopes that we might take advantage of Indonesia's experience to get the Central Bank involved in micro-finance. The Central Bank's rural credit program covered all of India but was totally bankrupt. The upside was that Bank had loan officers and offices all over the country. Only the system needed to be changed.

The deputy governor was interested in Bank Rakyat Indonesia's experience. BRI had been able to convert its bankrupt system to a commercially viable approach to credit and savings which eventually came to serve close to a quarter of Indonesia's population. We spent hours discussing it and brought in Marguerite Robinson, who, together with Dick Patton, had worked closely with BRI as part of the HIID program in Indonesia. We sent the Deputy Governor to Jakarta for consultations with BRI officials. He came close to establishing a pilot, but resistance within the Central Bank was simply too great.

Both ideas failed but pointed to the tantalizing aspects of our work in India. There's much potential; in HIV, on some policy issues, and in technical areas, we may have ideas or

experience that catch our counterparts' attention, but Indians are perfectly capable of doing pretty much everything they need to do themselves, and, ultimately, they make their own decisions to what they want to do.

*Q: There is the other side of it, too, that because they are so capable, and there is so much, it is such a big area, and so many interesting things are going on there, would you say that AID, through the people that set out there, learned a great deal from exposure to India that would be relevant and helpful in the work of AID generally? Was there a reciprocal to this?*

MYERS: You can't help but learn and grow being in India. It's an experience beyond compare—constant learning, culturally, artistically, historically. India's efforts to liberalize its economy had lessons for eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and its ongoing efforts (and continuing success) in developing democratic institutions, a free press, independent judiciary, and elections procedures for millions of people offered models for other countries. India's ability to develop and maintain democratic institutions despite its incredible diversity and historic social, ethnic, linguistic, and political divisions should offer encouragement to others.

*Q: Okay, all right. Let's move off India then, because you were there for four years.*

MYERS: We were there for four years. If I could just touch a little bit on living in India...

*Q: Oh, yeah, please do.*

MYERS: India is a much easier place to live than it to visit. Visitors, at least many of those who visited us, suffered physical, spiritual, and sensory overload. We had visitors who joked that, after their visit, they would be able to write a definitive coffee-table book on the great ceiling fans of India--they'd come to India, fallen sick, and spent entire visit on their backs looking at the ceiling fans. In fact, to be resident there was much easier. We had a comfortable base from which to explore. We lived briefly in West End next to the Shouries and then moved to Shanti Niketan and eventually to Amrita Shergill Marg, across from Lodhi Gardens. Our part of Delhi couldn't have been more accommodating with its beautiful parks, leafy streets, and interesting markets.

*Q: This is in Old Delhi, or New Delhi?*

MYERS: This is New Delhi.

*Q: I don't know Delhi that well.*

MYERS: Our last house, on Amrita Shergill Marg was just across from Lodhi Gardens. And Lodhi Gardens—

*Q: Sounds nice.*

MYERS: It was the perfect place from which to begin to explore India. Flights from the U.S. would arrive at two o'clock in the morning. We would pick visitors up at the airport and bring them to our house and then go across the street for a stroll through Lodhi Gardens where 15<sup>th</sup> century Mughal Tombs were lit up and winter fog (or pollution) created a mystical introduction to the Indian experience. It was like a private sound and light show without the sound unless you count the stray dogs braying through the mists around the tombs. You knew you were in India.

And then you could wake up the next day to find an elephant or camel parked in front of the house. For 35 dollars, we could hire an elephant—we needed to give the mahout three days' warning because the elephant had to walk from the outskirts of town. So, visitors would wake up in the morning, have breakfast, go outside, and go for an elephant ride down the street.

Old India was still right there. Every day, we'd see something interesting. Just outside our door, we'd see someone herding a dozen cows down the street on his Vespa. Flower stalls on many corners. Wedding processions, complete with candelabras carried on the heads of marchers and lit by generators pulled on trailers, parading down the street, and corner parks hosting sessions of laughing yoga in the early morning. Aesthetically, it was exciting. And the school was excellent, and our kids just loved it.

*Q: They were how old during this period?*

MYERS: They were seven, nine and 11 when we got there, and we stayed for four years.

*Q: Do they remember this period at all, and talk about it?*

MYERS: Oh, absolutely. The school, our travels, their friends. India produced some of their strongest memories—and relationships. They still have friends from elementary and junior high schools. We knew that they'd really adjusted to India, when we—for Diwali—took off for an overnight trip. On our way to the train station, we ran into an incredible traffic jam caused by the crowds attending traditional Ramayana street plays. We abandoned our taxi for rickshaws through old Delhi to the train station. If you are ever in Delhi, I encourage you to take a rickshaw through Old Delhi at night; you ride on a sea of people looking into brightly lit spice, jewelry and shoe shops busy with buyers.

By the time we got to the train station, we'd missed our train. Fortunately, we were able to get seats, riding third class, a few hours later. We fell asleep on the hardwood benches to wake up in the morning next to three sadhus (holy men) wearing little more than ashes and their tikka marks and holding their tridents. When our kids woke up next to the sadhus, there was no reaction. They took no particular notice. The sadhus were just a normal part of the Indian experience.

The opportunities for travel were remarkable. One of our favorite trips, each Thanksgiving, was to take frozen turkeys to Woodstock, a boarding school built in the

days of the Raj (1854) for the children of missionaries and civil servants. The school, in Mussoorie, a British hill station at the foot of the Himalayas, is just as you would imagine it always was—among the pines, perched on the side of a hill, complete with wood-burning fireplaces in the classrooms. There were a number of Americans on the faculty, including the former head of USIS who had retired and was teaching media, and they appreciated having turkeys for Thanksgiving. We'd have Thanksgiving up there with them every year, and in exchange we'd get a taste of what British India and the colonial experience had been like.

*Q: Sure. Well, was it hard to leave?*

MYERS: It was hard to leave except that, thanks to Linda Morse, our next post was Indonesia. USAID had slated me to go to the Philippines, where I had no experience whatsoever. But Linda had said to the bureau, "Well, this guy actually knows a little about Indonesia. Send him to Indonesia." So, off we went to Indonesia.

The Mission arranged for me to come out on an early TDY in February '98, just after I was first assigned. USAID had begun planning to close down the program. Vikka Moldrem, the Mission Director, had already to begun to let people go. We were winding down after 40 years.

*Q: Why?*

MYERS: Because economic growth had been consistently good. Suharto had been in charge for more than 30 years, and the country seemed to be on a reasonable trajectory. But by that February, Indonesia was beginning to feel the effect of the Asian financial crisis, and AID was beginning to rethink its strategy to close out. By the time we left India for Washington, Suharto had fallen, Americans and other expatriates had been evacuated during the disturbances around the regime's collapse, and the situation looked very different.

*Q: In what month was the Suharto...*

MYERS: He fell in May, and much of the international community, including the USAID mission evacuated.

There had been student riots, massive demonstrations, military and police action against students. Part of the Chinese section of Jakarta had been burned. There was possibility that Prabowo (Subianto) might take over. Nobody knew exactly what was going to happen.

Suharto resigned, and (B. J.) Habibie stepped in. Habibie was a technocrat, a scientist, an engineer, trained in Germany, with a PhD in aerospace engineering. When I was there in the 1980s, he was Minister for Research and Technology. We considered him eccentric, but influential, and we had a full-time advisor working with him in his office. He was interested particularly in producing commercial aircraft and helicopters in Bandung as a

way of moving Indonesia into a new age of technology and making the country a player in the global market. Some Embassy officials interpreted Suharto's decision to pick him as vice president as a way of his saying, "Don't get rid of me. You'll end up with Habibie."

But Habibie came in and opened up the door to reforms. He said, "We're going to have elections in the year. Political parties are free to operate, as is the media. We're going to look at decentralization. East Timor can decide its future. We'll rethink the status of Papua and Aceh."

It was a whole new world and a little bit like the collapse of the Soviet Union. We had a whole new set of opportunities.

*Q: And by the time you got there, was this just that the opportunity was there, but the steps to be taken had not yet been formulated? I mean, were you in a position where the timing was perfect for you to have a creative role with the Indonesians?*

MYERS: Yes, because nobody knew what was going to happen next or how to get there.

*Q: Who were your main contacts?*

MYERS: Well, the advantage was that a number of counterparts from the 1980s had done very well, rising through the ranks to become the heads of agencies or even cabinet ministers. One of my closest counterparts, Marzuki (Usman), was Minister of Tourism and later became Minister of Forestry and head of the Investment Board. Ma'rie Muhammad was just finishing up as Minister of Finance.

*Q: BAPPENAS (Ministry of National Development Planning)?*

MYERS: *BAPPENAS*: Ginandjar Kartasasmita was the head of *BAPPENAS*. All people with whom I worked a decade earlier. Within my first week there, Marzuki had a dinner to welcome me back. There must have been six ministers there.

*Q: Wonderful.*

MYERS: It was overwhelming. The access was remarkable. I remember one day sitting with Marzuki in his office at the height of the crisis, when unemployment was devastating, talking about the experience of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) during the depression, and how it could both create jobs and help in nation building. The next thing I know, Marzuki was doing a live-talk radio program, describing the CCC on his radio broadcast.

*Q: (laughs) That's wonderful!*

MYERS: I think one of the attractive things about working in Indonesia is that the Indonesians have always been so open to outsiders and to new ideas. They have been

willing to listen to the experience of others and then decide for themselves whether it has any use to them. And if they decide it doesn't and they don't need your help, they can tell you in such a way that you're not offended.

And they were so welcoming, but also such as distressing time. They were in the midst of an acute depression. The rupiah had lost 80 percent of its value. Unemployment and underemployment rose to close to 50 percent, the GDP dropped 15 percent. When we arrived, not only had a large section of Jakarta's old commercial section of town been burned, but there was little traffic on the roads—

*Q: That's the good news.*

MYERS: The air was so clear that from the top of the Borobudur Hotel downtown you could see the Puncak's volcanoes miles away. No factories were working and few cars were on the road. Normally, Jakarta's traffic and industrial pollution obscured views of the mountains. There was no pollution because nothing was working. The factories weren't working. The city's robust real estate development had crashed to a halt. Construction stopped. Mammoth cranes stood idle all around the city as unfinished skyscrapers grew mold and rust.

*Q: What was the Rupiah-Dollar exchange rate then?*

MYERS: When we arrived, it was back up to 10,000 or 11,000. It had fallen from 2,500 to 14,000, but was beginning to recover. It eventually stabilized around six or seven.

The flight of capital was dramatic, but was accompanied by an exodus of people as well. Rioting in the city, particularly attacks on Chinese Indonesians—who with three percent of the population were said to own 70-80 percent of the companies listed on the stock exchange—had frightened investors. It was hard to know how many had left, but billions of dollars had fled the country, and tens of thousands of workers were leaving the city to go back to the villages that served as their safety net. There was so much need, from a drought and food crisis in the eastern islands, to millions jobless and growing ethnic and religious tensions and open conflict. We didn't really know where to begin.

The (World) Bank was very active. Dennis de Tray, as country director, had been close to Ma'rie and the economic team during year of crisis and watched closely as things proceeded. He was extraordinarily collegial--after our first meeting, he sent a note to colleagues at the Bank, asking that they alert us to programs or projects where they thought we might be of help. The idea was that we could complement Bank activities and fill in where it might take the Bank more time. We joined forces on data gathering and reporting. We also met regularly with Canadian, Australian, British aid and UN colleagues. It was a close-knit donor community; we were all trying to figure out what to do without overly taxing Indonesian officials who were already up to their ears with no end of crises.

There was a drought and possible famine in the eastern islands. We were worried about

the financial recovery, economic policy, social unrest, massive numbers of un and under employed, outmigration to the rural areas, and overall political instability.

*Q: So in the middle of all that, what did you decide to do? What did the Indonesians decide? I mean, you had not unlimited resources.*

MYERS: Well, actually we had more resources that I would have expected. By the time I left Washington for Jakarta, we had promises of millions to help the elections and democratic transition. Once I got there, we began to tap into funds from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. In terms of priorities, we focused first on the humanitarian crisis. Bring in food, help maintain supplies in critical areas; then jobs—public works, food for work, get something happening in the cities. Work on the financial recovery. Rebuild confidence. Public messaging. Then begin work to prepare for the elections.

*Q: That was part of the democracy project?*

MYERS: To work on the elections we provided grants to IRI (International Republican Institute), NDI (National Democratic Institute), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

There was a range of things that we were trying to do almost simultaneously against a backdrop of tremendous political and social change. With Suharto's fall, it was as if the lid had been lifted on a pot of bubbling unrest. Aceh, always vulnerable, began to get more restive; Papua grew uneasy; tensions mounted between Dayaks and Madurese over land in Kalimantan and between Christian and Muslim villages in Sulawesi. In some instances, such as Kalimantan, it was the problem of failed policies such as transmigration coming home to roost. In others, like Aceh and Papua it was long-standing desire for greater autonomy and independence. Indonesia's remarkable diversity became a threat with simmering ethnic, religious, cultural conflicts aggravated by the financial crisis, economic collapse and political change.

*Q: One question about the size of the mission at that time, when you talked about it being reduced in size, or anticipated that it was going to be closing down, and then obviously, all these things happened, can you roughly just talk a little bit about what happened to the size of the mission? And then we'll get to the Indonesian setting.*

MYERS: I think we added 50 people within a year to the staff, Indonesians and Americans. We were building new offices every weekend for about six months. Roger Heller, our EXO (executive officer), would bring a construction crew in over a weekend, and we would come back Monday morning to find that he had created a new office. Staff found they had an office half the size of what it had been the week before, but there was a new office next door. We had to grow. At one point we were managing more than 400 contractors and grantees.

*Q: And your building was next door to the embassy?*

MYERS: We were next door on the compound in an old building reputedly used by the Japanese during World War II to hold prisoners and still occupied, some said, by ghosts. Even some Americans claimed to have seen—or at least felt—ghosts when they worked late in the office or on weekends.

*Q: And the ghosts appeared only on weekends?*

MYERS: —they were shy. I never saw one, unfortunately. None showed up at staff meetings.

*Q: (laughing) You know, the old AID office was that big building opposite Serena, the department store, that the U—that AID gave to the UN. That's where UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and others were there. But that was the original AID office in the 1960s before it closed, essentially closed down.*

MYERS: That would have been a great location, close to the Hotel Indonesia that in those days was probably the most important spot in town. Our compound was also in a good location--just across from Merdeka Square, a wide-open space, excellent for demonstrations as it turned out. In the old days people said it had been extraordinarily accessible—staff would ride their bicycles right up to the building and lean them against the porch. In time, the compound became more vulnerable, as highway and rail overpasses were built and high-rise buildings grew up in the neighborhood which looked down on our offices and yard. The changes complicated considerably the life of the regional security officer.

*Q: Well, but that's why putting USAID into the embassy complex was the—was an effort to provide that kind of protection.*

MYERS: That may have been the intention, but it didn't work. In 1986, a faction of the Japanese Red Army launched a mortar from Merdeka Square which looped up—

*Q: The Japanese?*

MYERS: The Japanese Red Army, a radical group protesting globalization, attacked the Canadian embassy, ourselves, and a few other spots around town during a G-7 meeting. They sent a little rocket that landed right in the middle of the compound, in the garden outside the cafeteria, but fortunately never exploded.

*Q: I missed out on that. All right, we're going to call a halt to this now. It's about, almost noon on the 27th of January 2017. And we will resume this at a date to be determined, but not too far off.*

*Thank you, Terry, appreciate it all very much. When we come back we'll be, again, focused on Indonesia and how you dealt with the various crises that were occurring during the five years that you were there. OK? All set?*

MYERS: OK.

*Q: OK, this is now the morning of February 1, 2017. I'm Alex Shakow, and we are continuing now with the third segment, I think, of Terry Myers's oral history. We are at ADST (Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training) in Virginia.*

*And when we left off, Terry was talking a little bit about Indonesia and about where the offices were and so on. But he wanted to focus on some of the main crises that he faced during that period from 1998-2003, when he was the mission director in Jakarta.*

*So, the floor is now open, Terry, and thank you again for doing this. And start by telling us what we should know, and, if you can figure out at the same time, what the lessons are that you draw from this that might be relevant to today or the future. Please don't hesitate to mention them.*

MYERS: All right. Well, in 1998, as I mentioned earlier, Indonesia was beset by crises. It had the financial crisis and economic crisis, and a humanitarian crisis with the drought. When we first arrived, a pall was over the city. The airport was empty, and driving in, we saw little traffic on the roads. Shopping malls were deserted, stores were drawing down their inventory, and shelves were empty. Along the roads, people had set up stalls to sell food because they no longer had construction jobs; some, we were told, were even run by movie stars who no longer had roles since no one was making movies and were trying to make a living with their small warungs. Construction cranes were standing idle across the city. And half the city's population had returned to the villages that were serving really as a social safety net for the country in crisis.

Buildings in Glodok, the Chinese section of Old Jakarta, had been pillaged and burned and a number of people killed. Money—and people—had begun to flee Indonesia, and the rupiah had collapsed. Inflation was dramatic. The president who'd taken over after Suharto fell, (Bacharuddin Jusuf) Habibie, as the vice president selected by Suharto, had questionable legitimacy.

But Habibie actually turned out to be quite remarkable. He talked about greater autonomy in the regions and set the date for new elections. He opened up political participation. There was a flowering of political parties, 48 or 50 or more, and news organizations--the government granted some 500 new licenses for media—radio stations and newspapers.

People took advantage of the great openness. Three independence movements simmered-- in Aceh, Papua in Irian Jaya, and East Timor. Of the three, East Timor was capturing the most world attention.

The donor community was working with the Indonesians to try to figure out where to focus first, and we in USAID were trying to ramp up a program which a year earlier had been slated to wind down.

And you asked in our last session what our numbers were. I went back and looked at our numbers, which doubled over a year. We got up to about 23 direct hires, 140 Indonesians, and eventually 250 contractors and grantees, because we had—

*Q: During this period of your being the director?*

MYERS: Yes. We—our Office of Transition Initiatives--even opened up temporary offices outside Jakarta, in Surabaya and Medan, and, ultimately, Dili in East Timor as well.

*Q: OTI?*

MYERS: The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), a unit within USAID, launched in the mid-'90s to allow us to respond swiftly in countries in the midst of conflict, stabilization, and transition. It was designed for countries in need of a quick fix, where we thought we could go in and do something flexibly and effectively to produce meaningful impact in a limited period of time. OTI came in with additional staff and funding to help us deal with the crises. They were invaluable.

One of the earliest things they did was to help respond to urban unrest and calm fears stirred by attacks on minorities. I can remember a meeting at the Borobudur Hotel, organized by one of our local employees, which brought together key media people from television, film, radio and newspaper. We must've had 30 Indonesians in the room, talking about what we might do to calm the waters. There was a threat of ethnic violence across the country; was Indonesia falling apart? They committed to form an NGO (non-governmental organization) that could create messages emphasizing pride in diversity, celebrating Indonesia's remarkable ethnic and religious mix, promoting understanding and bringing people together.

With OTI's funding, within a matter of weeks, Indonesia's most famous movie director, Garin Nugroho, had produced six public service announcements, running constantly on television, celebrating Indonesia's diversity and helping to restore a sense of community.

But that was just one thing that OTI did.

*Q: How did—How does that fit within the USAID mandate? It sounds like the kind of thing that the U.S. Information Service (USIS) would be doing. This was OTI?*

MYERS: Yes, the Office of Transition does a lot of work with the media. For instance, they brought in teams from Internews to train Indonesian journalists on conflict reporting, in Ambon and Poso, for example, where there were outbreaks of Christian-Muslim violence. How do you report events in a way that you don't aggravate the violence? This was an effort quite different from what USIS or USIA (U.S. Information Agency) or the (embassy) public affairs office had experience in doing.

*Q: But was this something that was part of a program agreed upon with the government?*

MYERS: We reviewed it with the government, we had government people in the training sessions, and the messages OTI developed ran as public service messages.

Your question on role or approval of government in our programs is important, particularly for programs dealing with civil society, political activities, and human rights. It is not one always easy to resolve. In Indonesia, it was easy in terms of elections work. We had approval of the government, and we worked, all donors coordinating, under the aegis of the UN Development Program. It was more difficult when it came to human rights organizations that had felt persecuted by security forces under Suharto and were concerned that if the government knew they had US funding, it might jeopardize their programs, or, liberal Muslim groups worried about what their own communities would think about their taking US assistance.

On the elections, we were training political parties on polling constituents to identify issues important to them, developing platforms, and supporting a range of activities related to the elections process—communications, observation, and monitoring. We worked directly with the Indonesian election commission—the KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum) on the logistics of conducting and reporting on the elections themselves.

In one interesting effort, NDI (National Democratic Institute) and IRI (International Republican Institute) helped Indonesians establish a cadre of trained poll watchers. The logistics were impressive. Indonesia, because of its size and spread on 13,000 islands across an area the reach of the United States, needed some 250,00 polling places. And in each of those polling places, there were to be three or four trained observers. The rectors of a number of Indonesian universities got together to set up a consortium called, id I remember correctly, the (Indonesian) Rectors Forum—and enlisted students from their universities for the training sessions being conducted by NDI and IRI on what goes into an election and how to observe it.

IFES, for their part, helped the Indonesians develop an educational campaign with a series of messages for TV, radio, and print on what elections should look like and what voters should expect when they went to vote. These began to run well in advance of the elections but blanketed the airwaves in the last week running up to the vote and gave Indonesians an idea of what the process entailed and their part in it.

Finally, much work needed to be done on the voting itself, the tabulation and reporting. Donors, and for us, NDI, IFES, and IRI, worked with Indonesians on everything from getting the vote boxes and ink to the polling places to establishing a media center to coordinate information on the elections and set up a quick count process that could give the country an accurate idea of the results long before the final tabulation was completed.

Indonesia had about a year to put all this together. The NGOs coordinated their roles, as did each donor. We worked closely with the Indonesians and other donors, operating independently but collaborating and meeting regularly as part of a donor consortium under the UNDP's aegis. It was an effort that included, ultimately, close to \$90 million in

donor funding.

*Q: Was this program ever evaluated to determine what its impact had been and what the overall assessment was of its—?*

MYERS: You know, one may well have been done, but if so, I've never seen it. It was a remarkable effort, which culminated a year after Habibie had announced it, with the first truly open parliamentary election in more than 40 years, and followed by a surprising but truly Indonesian, selection of President when the newly elected Parliament selected Gus Dur over Megawati. TV in the parliament—a sort of Indonesian CSPAN set up by IFES—recorded each vote as it was made on a blackboard at the front of the room, replicating the process that have been followed in villages across the country in the parliamentary elections.

Given the logistics, it was a very lengthy vote count for the parliamentary elections. But NDI had helped the Indonesians set up a separate vote count system based on polling so the—

*Q: Fast.*

MYERS: —the fast count (Parallel Vote Tabulation), and that reassured people. Plus the fact IFES had ensured widespread film reporting on the polling places on television reassured Indonesians that it had been a relatively free and fair election. Jimmy Carter and a host of international observers supplemented the waves of student volunteer observers teams across the country and testified to the elections' success.

*Q: I wonder whether anybody did the evaluation, because I can attest, myself, that when I went out as a Carter Center poll, I mean, observer in 2004, that it was amazing the number of—how the Indonesians ran that election, as you say.*

*I mean, they had these small polling places all over the country. It was absolutely remarkable what they were able to do, and I saw it first-hand. And I guess I was in Flores, or some place. But, in any case, it was quite an extraordinary—*

MYERS: It was wonderful to see: A small village, a white board being set up, and somebody standing in front of a crowd, as the votes are counted, putting scratch marks on the board in a way that was both transparent and comprehensible.

*Q: Very transparent. Anyway, well that was—and that was all something that emerged through the network of, initially, from OTI?*

MYERS: Actually, OTI was working not so much on the elections, but more on responding to the emergencies, the emerging crises. NDI, IRI, and IFES were the major US actors working on the election, and then we supported a host of Indonesian organizations like the Election Commission and civil society organizations like the Rectors Forum which had organized university students—trained by NDI and IRI--

around the country to serve as observers.

*Q: So the response was in the form of training media, or things like that. It was not shipping in—*

MYERS: But also, on civil society organizations. OTI was helping a number of groups, doing training on inter-ethnic decision-making.

When a village in Poso was burned, for example, they would be there within days to provide—

*Q: Poso is in Sulawesi?*

MYERS: Yes, a town in Sulawesi where there were serious Christian-Muslim conflicts. OTI would provide material aid—bamboo, materials for rebuilding, and humanitarian assistance, food and medical supplies, with support for local groups doing inter-ethnic counseling, to try to help communities begin to rebuild as quickly as possible while, at the same time, restoring some semblance of understanding.

*Q: Well, now what else was going on at the time? I mean, that's OTI and related election. But you had to program in other areas, right?*

MYERS: We had a huge economic program. We must've had 30 economists and financial consultants who were working with the Indonesians on everything from corporate restructuring and sale of assets--the Jakarta Initiative Task Force, an institution set up specifically to help with the restructuring of private companies.

*Q: Were these mostly contractors doing this work, or were they direct-hire—?*

MYERS: No, these were all contractors, managed by the mission.

*Q: And how many economists did you have to manage those people?*

MYERS: We probably had four. I remember adding a couple PSCs (personal services contractors), too.

*Q: And these were worked out with—through—the Ministry of Finance or through BAPPENAS (Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning) or through—?*

MYERS: Well, the Jakarta Initiative was actually an Indonesian institution. And then there was IBRA (Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency), helping the banks sort out their debts. So there were a number of *ad hoc*—I think they were *ad hoc*—organizations set up to deal with—

*Q: By the Indonesians?*

MYERS: By the Indonesians. We were able bring over experts who'd worked on the US savings and loan crisis to share our experience.

*Q: With who were you— I mean, you, as the mission director, had your major links with what part of the government, as a kind of coordinating or central focus?*

MYERS: Well, I would be talking to people at the Jakarta Initiative, or at IBRA, or at the Ministry of Finance, or in BAPPENAS, the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises. Boediono was the head of BAPPENAS, so I met pretty frequently with him. He'd worked closely with Bob Rucker on design of a USAID employment project in the 1980s. Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti, the Coordinating Minister for Economy and Finance, was both the former Ambassador to the U.S. and a Berkeley graduate, whom I'd met during my first posting in Jakarta when he was at the University of Indonesia. These were all people who had been around for quite a while and had a history of work with USAID. They had ideas, knew what they wanted, were used to working with advisors.

*Q: So, they were the ones who decided that these are the priority areas where we would like AID help?*

MYERS: Yeah. I could sit down with someone like Ma'rie Muhammad, whom I'd known earlier when he was at the Ministry of Finance working to privatize state-owned enterprises and was then heading IBRA, to talk about their needs were and whom they wanted for how long.

*Q: And were there coordination issues with the World Bank or other sources of support?*

MYERS: We actually had dozens of coordinating, mini-consultative groups, underneath the (World) Bank which met regularly. We had a very active consultative group. We were meeting twice a year and moved the site for the meetings from Paris to Jakarta so that the Indonesians could take greater ownership of the process. And then we had a number of sub-working groups working on specific problems that the Indonesians were trying to address.

*Q: Did they really work?*

MYERS: They worked surprisingly well. For instance, the group on decentralization, was one of the biggest efforts. And I think the Germans ended up taking the lead because they had the largest team and a fair amount of experience in decentralization. But we contributed people to that too.

I can remember going to a number of meetings in which we would all be talking about what we would be doing and where we were going to be working and who was going to be bringing what.

Occasionally, there were differences in the approaches being suggested--the Germans or some other donor might advocate for an approach different from what our advisors were

suggesting. They might propose a tax structure different from what our advisors were suggesting. Then the Indonesians would have to mediate, unless we could work it out first.

I don't remember enormous tension. I think we spent a lot of time working jointly, and in some cases, we added funding to other donors' programs so we were collaborating directly; we financed some UNDP and WFP (World Food Program) programs or directly funded advisors working with them. On elections assistance, for example, we funded one of the key UNDP advisors.

*Q: And did you have flexibility to do this as the mission director? Was there a lot of interference from Washington? Or how much latitude did you have?*

MYERS: You know we had what I think in retrospect was remarkable flexibility. For instance, when it became apparent that East Timor was going to become an independent country, we were given additional funds by an earmark. Tim Rieser, Senate Appropriations Committee staffer, said, "Here's \$10 million for planning for East Timor's eventual independence." And—

*Q: That was an initiative from the (Capitol) Hill, or was this something that AID asked for, and they responded. Do you know?*

MYERS: Well, it was initially from the Hill. In fact, there was an interesting battle because (USAID) Washington didn't want as much money going to East Timor as Congress wanted to give it. When this Congressional earmark moved up to \$25 million, they really got upset—they knew it would have to come out of some other program. USAID's budget was set and it was a zero-sum game. Money for East Timor meant less funding for other programs.

I knew that the Senate was going to give us more money—another \$25 million for East Timor and told the bureau, "I'm planning for it. I'm doing a strategy for it because I know it's coming. Staffers are telling me it's coming." And Washington said, "Don't work on that strategy." I said, "I've got a responsibility to be prepared. I know this money's coming." And it did come.

In terms of communication and coordination my problems were not so much with other donors or the Indonesians as with AID and State in Washington and the US ambassador in Jakarta. Bob Gelbard, our ambassador, an activist with a famous temper, thought that we weren't keeping him well enough informed. And I would argue that we all had so much going on, and we were doing our best to keep him informed on what he needed to know. He didn't buy it.

We had differences. I thought some of his requests were inappropriate. At one point, he wanted me to cancel a grant to an Indonesian NGO because it was actively critical of a US mining company. The NGO accused the company of dumping mercury into the rivers near its operations. The company complained that it was being harassed by a USAID-

funded NGO. I argued we couldn't stop the grant, and, eventually, the crisis passed.

After September 11, tensions rose. Ambassador Gelbard wanted me to break our agreement with a human rights group led by Munir Said Thalib, (one of Indonesia's most prominent human rights leaders, poisoned on a Garuda flight in 2004) because of a statement Munir had included in an article after 9/11. In his article, Munir had quoted comments by members of the Muslim community about possible Mossad involvement in the attacks on the World Trade Center and rumors circulating within the community. What he was reporting was other Muslims' opinion; the Embassy security officer interpreted it as Munir's and was outraged. In the end, we maintained the grant, but were forbidden to meet with Munir until Gelbard's successor as Ambassador, Skip Boyce, shortly after his arrival, hosted a lunch for Munir and other members of the human rights community in an effort to restore relations.

As tensions rose between the Mission and Ambassador Gelbard, he considered requiring all of our advisors working directly with government officials to meet with Embassy officers before and after advising their counterparts. We arranged instead for periodic updates; eventually, interest waned, and the updates became more sporadic.

Pressures within Indonesia were exacerbated by events outside the country. The 1998 Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar (Dar es Salaam) had raised concerns in Indonesia. Our security measures were increased particularly after 9/11 and grew dramatically after the Bali bombings in October 2002. Until the Bali bombings, most of us had only a vague idea of the connection between what we had been seeing in Christian-Muslim tensions in Poso, Maluku and Jakarta, and a SE Asia-wide or even world-wide movement of radical fundamentalism, involving Indonesians. Our relative ignorance, compared to what the Embassy security and intelligence community knew, contributed to the tensions within the Embassy community. We didn't see, or didn't understand, the range of threats which they were following.

It was a challenging period. During the four years, we had: September 11, 2001; the Bali bombings killing 202 people in October 2002; thuggish organizations like Front Pembela Islam attacking bars and nightclubs; religious and ethnic tensions simmering across Indonesia; unrest across the country and secession movements in Papua, East Timor and Aceh. After the US invaded Iraq, 10-15,000 Indonesians gathered outside the embassy in protest. We had two evacuations of personnel and families--one after 9/11 bombings and a grenade attack outside an AID staff house, a second after the Bali bombings.

*Q: Evacuations of all personnel or just the—*

MYERS: Well, the first evacuation was an "authorized" as opposed to "ordered" departure. This raises an important issue. An authorized departure means evacuation is voluntary. Most AID employees didn't want to go because they had projects with on-going activities for which they were responsible, including close to 400 grantees, contractors and dependents. Grantees—as distinct from contractors—do not fall under Chief-of-Mission Authority and so can't be ordered out on evacuation—the choice to

leave is theirs. Contractors can be forced to leave under an ordered departure and may have to leave under any evacuation order because of their company's insurance concerns. After 9/11 about a third of our employees left on what turned out to be a two-month evacuation.

The more difficult evacuation, after the Bali bombings, was the more difficult. It was extended due to growing Indonesian disaffection with U.S. policy in Iraq and increasing numbers of protesters outside the embassy. It then dragged on after deaths of Americans in a church in Pakistan continued to heighten concerns about terrorism around the world. Then also, Front Pembela Islam, Jema'ah Islamiyah, and Laskar Jihad, and other radical Indonesian Islamist groups were becoming more active and began to take action around town.

The second evacuation was an ordered departure. Differences in assessment of risks between officers, personal concerns, and perspectives on roles and responsibilities, all heightened tensions within the Embassy. Meetings of our Emergency Action Committee, held to discuss threat level and make recommendations to Washington on evacuation or return of personnel, could become contentious. Offices like USAID, Public Affairs, and the Library of Congress, with on-going projects and active engagement in the community were more focused on continuing operations and less concerned about security. Offices like Political and Economic Affairs, concerned more with reporting on current events or prognosticating, found the possibility of disengaging easier to accept.

We had challenges as well with the rigid interpretation of who should be evacuated. The requirement that "dependent spouses" be evacuated, for example, was particularly unsuited for a newly married Indonesian husband of an American officer. He had a business in Indonesia, didn't speak much English and had only been to the US one time for a week—to get married. We were finally able to keep him in country by declaring his wife "essential personnel." Another employee had been working to adopt for more than a year, was within a month of completing the adoption, and had been living for six months with the baby. The Deputy Chief of Mission suggested she could just put her baby back in the orphanage, and she should be evacuated. We were able to declare her "essential" as well. She stayed at post and completed the adoption process.

The battles with Embassy colleagues over enforcement of instructions from Washington about responding to events which required local context and nuance to understand convinced me of the need for an ombudsman, somewhere in Washington, to whom we could turn when crises occur in high threat posts and we need common sense consideration of risks. Security concerns and low risk-tolerance threaten our ability to do business. As it turned out, the greater risks may have actually been in Washington where families evacuated had to worry about anthrax in the mail in 2001 and the "beltway sniper" in 2002.

*.Q: Ah. Aside from the period when people were evacuated, were people constrained from visiting their projects and travel around the country? Which, I mean, did that occur?*

MYERS: We had some constraints: travel advisories and recommendations or order from the regional security officer cut travel to certain areas, and occasionally our office was actually closed down. We set up temporary working space in Kemang, a housing compound where a number of staff lived, outside of central Jakarta. Our EXO, Roger Heller created offices for us. We had phones, computers, and logistics support, and operated from there.

*Q: But unlike those situations where people were in war situations, you were not confined to the embassy most of the time or to the AID office?*

MYERS: No. We did get out. There were certainly places where we had to get clearance to go. For instance, the inter-ethnic violence between the Dayaks and Madurese in Kalimantan. We had sent our disaster and humanitarian assistance officer, Herbie (Herbert) Smith, up to take a look at it and do an assessment. Usually we could get approval, but the regional security office didn't always allow people to travel. There were days in which we had 10,000 or more protestors outside the Embassy. It was a source of some tension between the Ambassador (Gelbard) and the Indonesians—he thought they should be giving us greater police protection. They, not particularly happy with his public statements, were not in the mood to be responsive to his requests.

*Q: If you look back now on the four or five years you were there, and you look at the various activities you had underway, many we haven't talked about of course, which are the ones that stand out as being the most effective, the most significant in your mind as to what you think had the most impact on the Indonesians? What they may be considered to be the most effective—*

MYERS: I think the elections were an incredible homerun. And the development of institutions that have survived. The fact that Indonesia's had four, now five, peaceful transfers at the top. In a four-year period, they moved from Suharto to Habibie to Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid), who was impeached and replaced by Megawati Sukarnoputri who was then defeated in a free and fair election by SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono). The establishment of resilient democratic institutions has been a real victory for the Indonesians.

I think economic recovery was faster than people expected, and it included long-standing institutional changes.

*Q: That AID was involved in?*

MYERS: We and lots of other donors.

Decentralization has been remarkable, laying the groundwork for peace in Aceh and the transformation of the liberation movement into a political party after the 2004 tsunami. Progress has been made in Papua.

East Timor's transition was a tragic ending to Indonesia's presence there. It didn't have to be that way. The process moved too quickly. Indonesia's military hadn't been consulted and didn't support the transition. They encouraged local militias, largely gangs, who, after the 1999 plebiscite ravaged East Timor, pushing a third of the population into the hills or across the border into West Timor, and destroying close to 70 percent of the country's infrastructure, homes and commercial buildings.

This was a major sideshow for us because we were working on Indonesia's own transition, but intense international interest and the depth of the humanitarian crisis forced us to become involved in the gestation and birth of this new country, East Timor.

*Q: And how did you balance what you needed to be doing for the Government of Indonesia and for the nascent East Timorese government?*

MYERS: Well, I don't know that we struck the right balance because we were driven in part by political attention and by—

*Q: Political "attention"?*

MYERS: Political interest—there was a strong international movement in favor of East Timor's independence. Indonesia had held its successful parliamentary elections in May of 1999, everybody breathed a sigh of relief, and attention focused on East Timor.

After the August 30, 1999 plebiscite when 78 percent of the population voted against Indonesia's offer of special autonomy (in effect, voting in favor of independence), things unraveled quickly. With support from Indonesia's military, pro-Indonesian Timorese militias and bands of thugs began their rampage, people fled to the hills and West Timor, and the level and extent of violence caught the world's attention and brought UN intervention, led by the Australians.

*Q: Did you travel to East Timor yourself?*

MYERS: I went to East Timor a lot. And—

*Q: Could you go via Kupang (Airport) in West Timor or did you go around?*

MYERS: We went by way of Denpasar, although for a while we had to go through Darwin (Australia). Your question reminds me of a field trip with (J.) Stapleton Roy before the plebiscite as tensions were building there.

*Q: Was he the then ambassador?*

MYERS: He was Ambassador to Indonesia before Bob Gelbard. Stape is really an old school, gentlemanly, thoughtful, "central-casting" ambassador, son of Chinese missionaries, a Chinese scholar, a terrific speaker and superb strategist.

Well, I can't remember the exact date, probably in the spring of 1999. One of our meetings was with Eurico Guterres, the head of one of the local militias and a real thug; Stape wanted to get a feel for what the militias were thinking.

And so we went to visit Eurico, who had his headquarters in a run-down hotel, which looked like it was something out of a movie from the '50s. We sat in frayed lawn chairs, surrounded by his henchmen drinking beer, and ladies, hanging over railings on the balconies around the courtyard. Stape was sitting as formally as possible while Eurico explained how East Timorese are hot-blooded people who occasionally need to attack each other to release the heat.

Stape tried valiantly to see if there was some room for negotiation here. And it was apparent that there wasn't. I think his response was, "Can't we possibly use that heat more effectively in discussions?" But Eurico was leading a bunch of thugs, a very violent group of people getting weapons and encouragement from elements in the Indonesian military.

We had been involved in East Timor for years, particularly on the human rights side. Our largest project there was a coffee project. We had a wonderful, long-term consultant, who'd been working in Indonesia for 25 years, named Sam Filiaci. Sam had worked with CLUSA (National Cooperative Business Association/Cooperative League of the USA) working on agriculture cooperatives, and then he got into small enterprise development. When I was first in Indonesia in the '80s, he was based in Klaten, Central Java, helping Indonesians replicate Chippendale furniture and then get into teak lawn furniture exports. He helped the Balinese become major vanilla growers and exporters, breaking the back of a Madagascar monopoly, and resuscitated spice exports from Aceh. In East Timor he discovered coffee farmers who complained that, "when the Portuguese were here, we had real coffee. Now we haven't had any fertilizer. We don't have any pesticides. Our coffee plants are scrawny."

And Sam said, "Yeah, but you've got organic coffee."

And he got them into the organic coffee business and deals with Starbucks. Eventually, ten to 15 percent of the population was somehow engaged in the coffee business.

Sam then went on to set up clinics—health clinics—for the cooperatives, which came to service 25 percent of the population of East Timor! His is a remarkable success story.

*Q: Now these were with—I mean, he was an AID contractor?*

MYERS: He worked for us through a grant to NCBA CLUSA.

*Q: But the— So the— On the economic side, I mean, were you doing agriculture projects? Were you doing traditional projects? Or were the— Was this all a kind of support for institution-building and capital and—*

MYERS: Well, a lot of the aid to Indonesia was aimed at improving policies and the institutes that either were studying them or training Indonesians. Jim Gingerich managed a project that brought back Peter Timmer, Wally Falcon and Carl Gotch from Stanford's Food Policy Research Institute (FPRI) to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and BULOG (the Bureau of Logistics). They had worked for years with Indonesians on rice price policy and had established long-standing relationships. They advised on agriculture business development, supply chain management, and how to move into higher value crops. Indonesians were not growing for their own urban supermarkets. There was potential for producing high-value crops, fruits and vegetables, for the local market. And FPRI's work on rice pricing helped the Indonesians balance between the needs of urban consumer and rural grower, stabilizing the rice price close to the world price.

Sri Mulyani Indrawati, then at the University of Indonesia, a long-time director at the World Bank, and now Minister of Finance, worked with us on a program to send young Indonesian economists from regional universities to strengthen the planning capacity of regional governments.

*Q: And how did you, or what did you do with those people? Were they sent to the U.S.?*

MYERS: She picked 30 people, and we sent them to Georgia State (University) with Sri Mulyani as faculty advisor. It was a throwback to old Participant Training programs. Sri Mulyani went as an advisor for the second year of the program at Georgia State, which was run by Roy Bahl, who had done a lot of work for us in Russia on decentralization.

*Q: And did these 30 people then, having been—Did they spend a year at Georgia?*

MYERS: They spent two years at Georgia and came back with masters (degrees).

*Q: And did they then do what they were expected to do, which was to work with the regional authorities?*

MYERS: Then they were to go back to the regional universities and be available to the regional governments to strengthen economic policy and planning capacity. Sri Mulyani's participation was a good example of counterparts actively participating in leading planning, design and implementation of programs. Indonesians were particularly good at that, and she was one of the best. Boediono, eventually Vice President to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is another example.

I remember when Boediono, then at BAPPENAS (the State Planning Agency), worked with Bob Rucker on the design of an economic policy project in the early 1980s, which grew into the "Development Studies Project." It—or its successor--was still going when I returned more than a decade later. It included training advisors at BAPPENAS, the Ministry of Trade, Finance, and other key ministries. All this had grown out of the design Boediono and Bob had done which had included a series of seminars with young Indonesian economists. In the seminars they discussed critical economic policy issues, explored approaches to resolve them, and brought staff from various ministries on board.

Similarly, Jim Gingerich's project on agriculture supply chains around 2000-2002 included grants to 45 regional universities to do research on commodities in their regions and hold joint seminars with each region to talk about their findings. In both cases, the design process and project implementation were used to train, teach and build consensus, as well as produce a product.

*Q: Did you ever attend any of those seminars just to see what they were like?*

MYERS: No, I wish I had. I have to admit I'm a non-economist long dependent on the good economic advice of others.

*Q: Who did you have as your top economist in the mission?*

MYERS: Well, Paul Deuster was our senior economist, and Bob Rucker, who had been key to our economic work in Indonesia in the 80s and gone on to develop institutional linkages in Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, worked on strengthening regional capacity for economic planning. Jim Gingerich handled the programs focused on agriculture policy.

*Q: You were talking before these sessions held in Bangladesh by Eric Griffel or others. Were they seminars reminiscent of those, do you think? I mean, obviously, those were more intellectual, and this one was designed to bring about change in the actual running of the Indonesian—*

MYERS: I think this type of joint planning, seminars and design with our counterparts is something we all gain from; it is an excellent model, time and resources permitting. We need to hear from outsiders and to learn together, and the extent we can do it with our counterparts and partners, the greater the learning and teambuilding, and the better the design and implementation later.

*Q: In your experience now, at the end, did you—do you—believe that the Indonesians were more open to benefit from advice than people in many of the other countries where you have worked? I mean, you talk about some of these changes that took place, which are political economy and institutional change. Not that I want to rank order countries in the willingness of their people to absorb AID info. But if—Did you find that the Indonesians were particularly more susceptible or open to working together and having a role in what was being done than many other—*

MYERS: Well, there's such a history, you know, going back to the Berkeley Mafia, which set the model in the 1950s for donors like USAID. Many of the 20,000 Indonesians we sent off for masters and PhDs in the decades following returned to take up leadership positions across the government and private sector. Many eventually moved into positions where they could call on their professors for advice, and those professors, in turn, brought out their graduate students to do research and advise on implementation. The Policy Implementation Unit in the Ministry of Finance, aided by HIID advisors and graduate students like Steve Radelet and faculty like Larry Summers, is a good example of that type of relationship

This may have helped Indonesians develop a type of self-confidence with donors and advisors. They feel that they have an understanding of their own needs. They may not have all the tools that they want, but they know they can get them. And there's a level of trust in their advisors and an ability to decide what is good advice and what's not. And no compunction against telling an advisor, "Thanks, but we don't think that's going to work here." That ability was certainly different from any other country I've been in.

*Q: When you think about the focus in today's AID programs, more and more towards fragile states and countries that are weaker, institutional base, but maybe not that much weaker than what Indonesia was in 1950s and '60s, can you imagine that some of the lessons from the use of Participant Training, the bringing—the arrangements—that you describe, with having these relationships between faculties that have common interests and so on, can you imagine that working in some of the African countries that are still—*

MYERS: I tried in Senegal, when I was there, actually. I brought Tyler Biggs, an advisor from HIID to spend time with my counterpart at the Ministry of Finance, the Deputy Minister. And the Deputy Minister was very interested in a relationship similar to the one in Indonesia. We wanted to do it; we just couldn't quite work it out. It may have been a language problem. Or, it may have been cultural—perhaps, resistance from competitive French advisors. I'm not sure what it was.

But I think it's a worthy model: Participant Training, coupled with technical assistance, coupled with institution building. You've got the institution, which serves as the nest; you take qualified people; you send them overseas for additional training and experience; you bring them back, and give them the support they need and you've created a connection that can endure for a generation or more.

And it just gives the participants access to new ideas and culture. It gives them a window on what everybody else in the world is thinking about a problem.

*Q: Is that assessment of your Indonesia experience the thing that you would highlight most, based on those four or five years that you were there? Is there anything more about the Indonesian program that you would particularly like to highlight?*

MYERS: Well, I think that this is a bit self-serving, but I—

*Q: That's ok. That's what oral history is all about.*

MYERS: The overriding lesson is that I think we need to give mission directors lots of authority! Pick your Mission Directors wisely and give them the flexibility to respond to the needs on the ground. Let them take risks. Hold them accountable. Don't be afraid to replace them or move them someplace else if they are not succeeding. Tom Ricks, writing about Eisenhower during World War II in his book The Generals said that one of Ike's great strengths was that he was unafraid to give his generals great authority and if they failed to live up to expectations, he wasn't afraid to move them. They didn't have to

be humiliated, but just removed and placed in jobs where they could be more effective.

In terms of tools, we were lucky. A tool like OTI was great, and we were also fortunate to have people give us money for the elections as well. Indonesia's transition had political support as did East Timor later. We benefitted greatly from the interest in, and support for, Indonesia and East Timor; we did not want for ideas or for resources.

We had excellent support from the US business community. We set up an American Chamber of Commerce AmCham advisory committee to USAID which met regularly. Our economic advisors could go to them and say, "Here's what we're thinking of. Here's what we're working on. Here are some legal reform ideas. What do you all think?" They could get advice based on practical experience from AmCham members. The relationship helped us substantively in thinking through our programs, but it also helped politically. When AmCham members went to Washington to knock on doors, they would go up to the Hill and talk about more money for AID. Paul Cleveland, who had been a foreign service officer in Jakarta and was deputy executive director for USINDO (the US Indonesia Society) and participating with American businessmen from Jakarta when they made their "door knocks" on the Hill said that members of Congress reported that they'd "never seen business arguing for foreign assistance like American businessmen from Jakarta advocated for AID in Jakarta."

*Q: And did—I mean, were there actual programs jointly with the private sector? Did you open up avenues for the private sector to play a role? Or was it just that the policy work that was being done resulted in the—*

MYERS: Well, policy was one way that they could participate; advice on programming was another. But we could get them involved in implementation too. One of my favorite stories was a flood relief effort in Jakarta one February when the rains left thousands homeless. Herbie Smith, now mission director in Afghanistan but then heading our humanitarian response program, put together a group that included AmCham providing donations; Catholic Relief Service and World Vision organizing the relief supplies; Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, two sometimes opposing, large Muslim organizations, identifying the needy; and students from the Jakarta International School, packing the bags for 15,000 victims left homeless by the floods. And this was all taking place in one big open field. American business, American students, NGOs of different religions, all working together to deliver assistance. It was an example of the sort of wide-spread support that you could get.

We also had joint ventures and public-private partnerships with American companies. We were working up on the Bird's Head (Peninsula), looking at how—

*Q: "Bird's Head"?*

MYERS: The Bird's Head, the spit of land jutting out of the northwestern part of Irian Jaya. Villagers were getting some support from Mars (Mars, Incorporated) for cocoa farmers. We were providing some technical advice to the cocoa farmers and cocoa farmer

organizations. Certainly, Sam's work with coffee opened possibilities with people like Starbucks. We looked to Citibank for help on small enterprise development and law firms for pro bono work for NGOs.

But it was not all collaborative. As I mentioned, we also had some run-ins where—when we were supporting Indonesian environmental groups reporting on American mining companies' activities—we heard not only from the companies, but from the Ambassador and occasional members of Congress. We had spent some time explaining ourselves to the Hill.

*Q: Did you go up to the Hill yourself on visits?*

MYERS: I made pretty regular visits up to see Paul Grove and Tim Rieser, who were the two appropriations staffers most responsible for our programs. And Tim gave us earmarks for East Timor, for conflict mitigation and for orangutan habitat. Paul, who had worked for IRI in an early incarnation, was interested particularly in the elections work.

*Q: And I assume that these earmarks did not carry additional money with them, which is one reason why AID-Washington didn't like them.*

MYERS: Exactly.

*Q: So they came out of somebody else's hide.*

MYERS: Occasionally, yes. Occasionally it was economic support funds, which came out of some State Department fund. But it's true. USAID leadership actively discouraged us from talking earmarks. But we did enjoy Congressional support. Robin Cleveland, Mitch McConnell's staffer was an active supporter. I don't know if you remember Robin, but she went to the Bank with—

*Q: I do. Of course she's Paul Cleveland's daughter.*

MYERS: And a friend and colleague of Paul Wolfowitz's. So when he went to the Bank, he took her as his executive assistant. Robin could be tough, but she loved Indonesia. She had lived there in 1965 during the "Year of Living Dangerously" when her father, Paul Cleveland, was economic officer and had fond memories. She told a good story about riding around Jakarta when she was about ten. A friendly Indonesian soldier who had parked his tank outside the family's house offered her a ride and off they went around town with Robin sitting high up in the tank. As a result, she followed Indonesia closely and was always a strong supporter of the Indonesia program.

*Q: Well, you were on the right side of history at that point.*

MYERS: Well, I was until I got transferred to Russia. By then Robin had moved to OMB. Her sympathy for Indonesia did not convey to Russia. She not interested in giving money to Russia.

There were other lessons from the Indonesia experience. One was the overriding importance of leaders, like Habibie, able and willing to embrace change. Indonesia had generals, like Agus Widjojo interested in leading the military out of Parliament and business. Indonesia's transition was fortunate to have military interested in security sector reform.

*Q: But AID didn't have any particular involvement with them, did they?*

MYERS: In fact we did. I mentioned all the consultative groupings. Well, we had one on security sector reform and met several times as donors to talk about corruption in the police and security forces and the role of the military. Increasingly, as Indonesia suffered through repeated outbreaks of ethnic and religious violence and particularly after the trauma of East Timor and concerns about similar conflict in Papua and Aceh, donors began to recognize the importance of security sector reform. It was clear how much Indonesia's recovery depended on improvement of security. We even had discussions with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), then Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs. We were concerned about the ongoing war in Aceh and the possibility of mediation. We were involved. OTI was funding the Henry Dunant Centre, a center with expertise on mediation and conflict resolution. Together with other donors, we were meeting with Indonesians on the conflict and how to resolve outstanding issues. We were financing peacekeeping and supporting NGO activities.

*Q: Was it essentially independent of USAID, or were you keeping—*

MYERS: No, that's an interesting question because my predecessor had not welcomed OTI when it first came to Indonesia, seeing it an intervention from Washington without mission oversight. When I got there, I moved OTI into our offices to make them part of the mission. I actually sat them next to our democracy-governance office since I thought that they had overlapping responsibilities. I tried to get them to work together. I failed. It didn't work. Cultures differed. The two heads of the offices couldn't agree. But I grew to see the advantages of a unit with some autonomy and a less bureaucratic approach. The head of OTI, Michael Stievater, was an innovative thinker, excellent recruiter, and fine manager. He was a great asset. He just needed room to operate.

*Q: He was the head of OTI in Jakarta?*

MYERS: In Jakarta. We worked closely together. He kept me informed, and I gave him lots of independence. It worked fine and when OTI's mandate ran out—it tries to stick to a short-term, generally two-year, assignment in a country--we simply incorporated their unit, personnel, and the contracts they were managing into our Mission-funded and managed program.

*Q: Did the Indonesians and—I mean, did, I mean, I've lost track of the timing of the settlement of the civil war up there and so on and so forth. But did the Indonesians see OTI and AID and the U.S. Government as a helpful force for bringing resolution to this?*

MYERS: They did, at times. In the beginning, we were working very closely with the Indonesians and with our Embassy colleagues. You know, this was Bob (Ambassador Robert S.) Gelbard's cup of tea. He had worked on the Balkans, and he really wanted to help the Indonesians make peace in Aceh. He began the effort in 1999, just after Gus Dur's election, and he had a good feel for it. He and I had differences in style and substance in other areas of our operations, but in security and peacekeeping, Bob was creative, experienced, and a great asset. He had knowledge and contacts. Bringing in the Dunant Center, for example, was his idea, as was asking a group of eminent people, including General Anthony Zinni and Martti Ahtisaari, to help as mediators. He used USAID well to support the process.

Discussion between the Indonesians and GAM (Free Aceh Movement) with help from the Henri Dunant Center and donor support made real progress, a ceasefire was declared, and in December 2002 we all gathered for a donor summit in Tokyo. The Bank's Country Director, Andrew Steer, and I were co-chairs on the donor side with SBY, then Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, representing the government. We raised pledges of \$180 million for the peace process. Progress continued for more than a year until Megawati, in her new role as President and with encouragement from some in the military, lost patience and moved against GAM. And it wasn't until the tsunami in 2004 that there was a chance for a restart—

*Q: And that's—After that is when the former Finnish president—*

MYERS: Martti Ahtisaari, who had been involved with the Henry Dunant Center in early discussions, returned to help mediate.

*Q: OK, do you think that's enough on Indonesia at the moment?*

MYERS: I hate to leave it.

*Q: I do too. So how did this change from this beautiful tropical country come to happen and you become the mission director in Moscow?*

MYERS: Well, Moscow was available, and I'd been interested in Russia since my time on the desk. I'd been in Indonesia almost five years. The family had been separated twice by evacuations—we were in the midst of a second, longer separation, and we were ready for a move.

*Q: As I recall, you said at an earlier stage, that your wife was, when it was an option of going to Moscow or going to India, that she opted for the obvious warmer, English-speaking, and so on. But this time around?*

MYERS: This time around, Lynn was—I guess, absence makes the heart grow fonder--more open to the idea. Since we'd already been separated for three months of what became an almost six-month separation, the likelihood that we'd be together in Moscow

made it look better.

*Q: I see. So that was the unexpected part of the Indonesian experience? It was a positive force.*

MYERS: Yes. And Moscow looked relatively stable.

*Q: So it was available, and you were offered it, and there was no issue?*

MYERS: No major issue but it still required a little negotiation. There was someone else—from a country in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau--bidding who argued that the bureau should select one of its own. I was bidding from outside, but again I was fortunate--Linda Morse was the Bureau's Deputy Assistant Administrator, and I was able to gather support from a few other people as well.

How much of life is luck? When we were in Delhi, my co-little league coach, with two kids on the team had been Beth Jones (who went on to become Ambassador to Kazakhstan--the first US Ambassador to learn to snowboard in Almaty). Beth had become the Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasia and was able to put in a good word. Bill Taylor, who was working on Russia when I was the desk officer and was a seatmate on our trip with Brian (Atwood) where we were marooned in Georgia when we ran out of gas leaving Armenia, had gone on to become head of the office coordinating assistance to the former Soviet Union.

*Q: So was this assignment to Moscow—Again, this is a part of AID history I'm not really familiar with. But was this kind of the winding down of the program?*

MYERS: Exactly. That was the intent...Carol Peasley was the mission director just before me and her final charge was to develop a strategy to wind down our presence.

*Q: And it took you four years to implement?*

MYERS: Well, I guess I'm a slow implementer. But actually, I thought it was too early to shut down and tried to develop a new argument and a new strategy. Andrew Natsios, Administrator at the time, had ordered up a policy white paper, developed under the aegis of Doug Menarchik who had worked on strategy for the Air Force, which argued that the Agency had a mission that extended beyond humanitarian assistance and development. The paper outlined a range of goals including addressing national security concerns. It brought together all the reasons why you have AID. It talked about five operational goals: transformational development, strengthening fragile states, humanitarian assistance, national security strategic, and global issues. The paper gave us the framework that we needed to argue for a presence in Russia for strategic national security reasons and to encourage collaboration on global issues, not for development alone.

Judging from the outside, the Russians didn't need us. You'd drive in from the airport, and you'd see IKEA and modern shopping centers along the highway. Given Russia's

wealth, it was increasingly hard to make a case for our being there on the grounds of humanitarian assistance or development.

*Q: But you could probably see IKEA in quite a few African countries too, so.*

MYERS: True. But Russia was changing rapidly—at least materially. The change was visible. Neon had come to Moscow. The city didn't look beaten down as it had in the '90s. The Russians were plenty competent and many knew what needed to be done. Nevertheless, there were a number of areas to which they needed to pay more attention, not just for their wellbeing but for ours as well. And there were issues on which we wanted them to be working with us.

*Q: Such as?*

MYERS: Such as non-proliferation, cross-border crime, trafficking and money laundering, infectious disease, counter-terrorism, climate change and environmental protection.

*Q: And how did AID fit into those things?*

MYERS: Well, in a number of ways. Work on infectious disease is a good example. Russia had a major HIV crisis on its hands, an exploding number intravenous drug users and commercial sex workers. The government was largely ignoring the problem. We saw a major opportunity to get the Russians involved in working with us globally on HIV/AIDS while increasing awareness of the danger they faced at home. We were just starting PEPFAR (U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) at the time, and the program was awash with money for Africa. Africa didn't have enough doctors. Russia had been training doctors for years; they were plentiful and low-paid--about \$1,000 a month. So, relatively cheaply, we thought, we could get Russian doctors to go to Africa to fill in, working with our Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and collaborating with PEPFAR programs there. Africa would get advanced medical talent, and when the doctors returned to Russia, they'd know something about HIV.

*Q: But the government wasn't going to acknowledge that there was any AIDS in Russia.*

MYERS: Exactly! That's why we wanted to educate the health ministry and a bunch of Russian doctors on the consequences for Russia if they didn't pay more attention to HIV. Unfortunately, while popular with the Russians, the idea got very little traction at political levels in (U.S.) Health and Human Services, where Administration appointees feared the effort would help the Russians re-establish a toehold in Africa. We had to work very hard to send--I think we ended up sending maybe a dozen--Russian doctors eventually to Ethiopia and Namibia. But the dream had been for far more than that.

*Q: It's interesting that HHS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) even had a view about it.*

MYERS: It was a political appointee, a deputy at HHS, who had first noticed the proposal. It caught his eye, and, I think, he called it to Republican Senator William Frist's attention. Frist then brought pressure to bear on the political appointee in the State Department heading the PEPFAR initiative that controlled our HIV/AIDS budget. The proposal got politicized before it had a chance to flourish. We cobbled together a few visits. The program helped relations with the Russians—it was one of the few in which we had real cooperation from the government. The officials in Russia's Ministry of Health loved it. A number of their people had been, in their youth, part of Russia's aid program in Africa. They had fond memories of their own work there and could see the utility to the program.

*Q: Well, I suppose that, I mean, eventually, the Russians did acknowledge that they had a very serious HIV problem. And they've been quite large recipients of local funding. So, I suppose that even those dozen doctors played a useful role.*

MYERS: I hope so. But given Russian attitudes toward homosexuality and commercial sex and cultural barriers such as those set up by the Russian Orthodox Church, it was hard to get their attention. We made progress. For example, we were able to get \$200 million worth of free public service advertising about the threat of HIV from Gazprom Media. The Minister of Defense, with help from both our Department of Defense and USAID, sponsored a HIV/AIDS conference with representatives from militaries from across the former Soviet Union. And we felt it was a great victory when the Russian Army gave a grant for peer counseling of new recruits to a Russian NGO that we had established through one of our programs. Again, it was institution building. A US NGO—PSI—established a Russian counterpart. The counterpart was able then to carry on working on HIV as the US NGO faded to an advisory role. We were able to interest a number of Russian organizations, including private and even some government corporations, in HIV counseling and treatment programs for employees.

*Q: —who picked it up. Well, from their standpoint—*

MYERS: They needed to be concerned about worker health. The long-term projections for the impact of HIV on the number of working-age Russians were frightening.

There were other areas for collaboration. In terms of strategic issues, we worked together on a number health issues with cross-border implications--avian flu, for instance, hepatitis, and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. Similarly, we shared a strategic concern about proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. The U.S. had a large non-proliferation program helping the Russians dismantle production facilities for weapons of mass destruction. I thought there was a role for USAID. The non-proliferation work was going on in villages without providing any benefits for the people living there. With US assistance, the Russians were dismantling a chemical weapons facility in Shchushye, for example, but doing nothing in terms of improving energy supply, roads, infrastructure or health for villagers. We argued we could go in with AID programs in these villages to support the non-proliferation effort.

*Q: And did you get support for that from Washington?*

MYERS: We were able to provide some help from existing projects—using advisors from Russian NGOs we were already supporting. There was encouragement for the philosophy from Embassy colleagues but no new financing from Washington. We often needed to cobble resources from a number of sources. For example, we had been working for some time with the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC) and the Central Bank (of the Russian Federation) on deposit insurance, bank supervision, and monitoring. The Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, our chief counterpart, had actually worked for FSVC in the '90s before becoming deputy governor of the Central Bank; he knew how we operated and trusted us.

*Q: What's his name?*

MYERS: Kozlov. Andrei (Andreyevich) Kozlov. And he was a strong supporter of improved bank supervision and wanted FDIC (U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) help. We were providing him support and training through the FSVC. But working on bank regulation in Russia is dangerous, and, tragically, Andrei was assassinated in a parking lot—a typical Russian assassination—most probably because he had closed down a couple of banks for not meeting standards.

This was the caliber of partner we had, but we had serious resistance to the program at home. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) opposed assistance to the Central Bank, arguing that if the Russians wanted help, they could pay for it themselves. It was an argument we often heard, but which ignored the nuance of operating a program in a complex political environment, where a country may have the resources, but lack the political will for reform, and our role is to support the reformers, sometimes in opposition to others in their organization. Our argument in this case was that the Central Bank could pay for it, but not everybody in the Central Bank supported the work. Our argument was that “the deputy wants the program, and he can get some money but not full funding.” Eventually, we were able to make an argument for limited funding and went ahead with a joint venture, public-private partnership with Central Bank money, our funding and pro bono technical assistance from Citibank.

*Q: And so, did you close the mission down by the time you left or not?*

MYERS: No. No, we had downsized it by three or four Americans and a few Russians, and we had begun to think about the possibility of ending the USAID presence and replacing it with an new “Office of Cooperation and Programs” in the Embassy, which would be responsible for USAID projects and the Embassy’s operational programs in the Offices of Environment, Science and Technology, Public Affairs, and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

*Q: How many employees did you have? When you came in, how many were there and how many were left?*

MYERS: Let's see, we started with 27 Americans and 96 Russians and a budget of \$75 million. We ended with 22 Americans, 85 Russians and a budget of \$90 million.

*Q: So the instructions that Carol had put in place, you managed to—*

MYERS: Well, our needs—and strategy--changed. For instance, we were concerned about the possibility of radical Islam in southern Russia, weakening the country nationwide. Soon after my arrival, in September 2004, Chechen nationalists took over the school in Beslan in North Ossetia, holding more than 1000 hostages, leading to a siege that ended with nearly 400 deaths. It was clear that Russia needed to do something more to integrate its Muslim population, particularly those living in the North Caucasus.

*Q: Or completely destroy them.*

MYERS: Something they've tried to do for centuries.

We wanted to set up a program in the North Caucasus. And this won the support of Robin Cleveland—

*Q: In the CIA (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency)?*

MYERS: No, by this time she had left Senator McConnell's office and was working for OMB—and Tim Rieser, Senator Leahy's senior staffer on Senate Appropriations. We had bipartisan support for a \$10 million program in the North Caucasus. We provided support to non-government organizations working on jobs and humanitarian assistance—

*Q: How did the—I mean, I presume you needed Russian government approval for this?*

MYERS: That's an excellent question. They did approve it initially, but it was controversial and not all elements in the government were supportive. We later learned that the FSB was particularly concerned. Initially, we met with key Russian officials, with Ambassador Vershbow, and they gave us tentative approval, but made it clear that they weren't happy with our working on media or with human rights organizations. They didn't mind our working with the agricultural cooperatives or the Center for Fiscal Policy on regional administration. Other donors were interested as well and we even had a mini-consortium established under the World Bank's auspices—Kristalina Georgieva was the Bank's country director--to review our plans with the president's representative for the region. We took joint trips to the region with the EU and UNDP representatives. We worked hard to get Russian understanding at both the state level in the Caucasus—particularly North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya--that this was an international, not just US, effort.

*Q: If it were technical stuff, that would be OK. But anything that smacked of being political—?*

MYERS: Exactly. They got understandably nervous about media and human rights work.

And they became increasingly nervous after the Color Revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005.

We could see that times were going to be challenging. USAID had signed a memorandum of understanding in September 2003 with Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Open Russia Foundation for collaboration on health, media and education projects. It looked promising. Khodorkovsky was setting up something like a Soros's Open Society Institute in Russia. His own Open Society. We could co-sponsor projects.

About a month after I became Mission Director, as he got off his airplane to attend a meeting of NGO and donors, including Chris Brown, then head of our democracy/governance office, Khodorkovsky was arrested. He was thrown in jail. And that was the end of his "open society" and the beginning of his ten years in prison.

We got word that the government was looking at some of our programs. In fact, one of my earliest field trips was to Samara to visit the NDI offices to see why one of its local employees had been detained by the police. I met with the federal prosecutor who had accused him of teaching English on the side without a license. They were beginning to monitor democracy programs more closely. Alex Sokolowski, a USAID democracy specialist in Washington, in Moscow on a TDY, set up a meeting for us with Sergei Markov, a Russian political scientist who sometimes speaks for the Kremlin but had worked with Alex at NDI in the 90s. Markov told us that after Ukraine's Orange Revolution, the Russians were increasingly skeptical about the work of NDI and IRI and that our programs were in jeopardy. One of our democracy NGOs had a computer stolen; others reported harassment.

In fact, by quirk of our own US government bureaucratic politics, USAID had only partial control over the work of the democracy NGOs. NDI and IRI received funding not only from us, but from State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL); and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) gave grants to Russian NGOs directly from Washington as well.

*Q: Was there a clear division of—*

MYERS: No, there was not. There were overlaps between Embassy-run programs and AID-run programs and programs run by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington. So, some Russian democracy NGOs had funding from three different sources. Division of labor and coordination of programs were largely personality driven. In Moscow, we worked closely with DRL staff in the Embassy on funding of the democracy programs with NRI and NDI and with human rights organizations. Collaboration was excellent. It was less close with NED which was quite protective of its programs and grantees and thought it important that they had their own unique relationships.

*Q: And— But theoretically, had approval from the Russian government.*

MYERS: Theoretically, although NED, working from Washington, was more on its own. We maintained that our work with political parties, training on polling and platform development, for example, was open to all comers, and in some cases, United Russia, the government's party, actively participated in our training programs.

*Q: I'm assuming that, at this time, those have been closed down by the government?*

MYERS: The Russians closed USAID down in 2012 and has subsequently banned NED, NDI and IRI as "undesirable" organizations. Their offices in Russia have been closed, and Russians receiving money from them are liable to prosecution under Russia's "foreign agents" laws.

But despite concern about our work with democracy and human rights NGOs, the government was not a complete monolith, and there were areas in which we had support and relatively good relationships with our counterparts. I mentioned our work with the Ministry of Defense on HIV/AIDS where they ended up funding a group that we had started.

*Q: Presumably because they saw—*

MYERS: —the need.

*Q: —this as being important in terms of their troops and others that were affected by this.*

MYERS: They were finding it increasingly challenging, because of a demographic decline fueled by alcohol-related deaths, disease, low birth rates, to find enough healthy recruits.

*Q: But this was funded not by the Pentagon or PEPFAR? It was funded out of an AID—*

MYERS: We had joint funding. We had some funding from DOD (U.S. Department of Defense), some from PEPFAR, and we had our own funding.

*Q: Was this to be—I mean, when one thinks of coordination issues, you think more about the problems on the ground and getting coordination on government ministries in places where you're working.*

*But now, because of the proliferation of foreign aid programs through different agencies in the United States, you have coordination responsibilities that transcend that. So it used to be that AID would have been the place that would have been in charge. But now, you have these "spigots," as appropriations committees used to say. Did you find that this was complicating for you? Did you have to keep bouncing balls and involved?*

MYERS: Well, it was both an opportunity and a pain. We had some real challenges, but we welcomed the possibility of tapping other agency's resources. Again, much depends on personalities, and the real art and creativity in development work often comes in the

negotiations involved in coordinating resources, interests, concerns and personal ambitions.

For instance, for a while we were having real difficulties with our colleagues at State and the CDC person that they were managing out of their offices. We were lucky. The Embassy got a new person in their office of Environment, Science and Technology. We helped them recruit a tandem couple from CDC with both TB and HIV expertise. We moved CDC into our offices. We all became one team. It worked fine.

Dan Eagle, the Defense Attaché, an Air Force General and our next-door neighbor (you can't overlook proximity as a factor in building relationships), couldn't have been more supportive of our work on HIV. He had a nephew who had died of HIV, and his speech at the Defense Ministries conference on HIV touched officers from around the region with his personal story. Our work was a real joint effort.

In relooking at how the US handles foreign assistance in some countries, we may need to re-visit the question of combining our programs. When it looked as though USAID might be forced to downsize in Russia, as I mentioned, I suggested that combining Embassy programs in energy, environment, human rights, refugees and public affairs with our own in a combined office responsible for programs and projects.

We were already back-stopping the Forest Service and (U.S.) Department of Agriculture on a pest control effort. We were supporting CDC. We had the local employees with technical skills and project design and management experience. We had the capacity to support other government agencies that wanted to do programs in Russia. We got a hearing on the idea, but it would've required major changes and never got a full consideration.

*Q: A hearing from where?*

MYERS: We got a hearing from the ambassador. He liked it. He thought, "OK, this might be worth pursuing." But Washington was less interested--it was easier to stick with the *status quo*.

*Q: Because of Washington forces.*

MYERS: Because of Washington forces. In the field, we combined where we could. We did a joint program on university linkages with the public affairs section and a student-training program. And we had a pretty good relationship at the end on health issues with the science and technology office.

*Q: When you think about it, this Moscow experience was quite different from most of the other things you had done, right? I mean that this is a country that was unlike—I know you'd been a desk officer during some of this. But you ended your AID career working in this most unusual of countries. Now, how was it that you decided, at that point, to finish your direct AID work? I mean, that's, after that, you went to the National Defense*

*University (NDU), right? And so you—Did you leave AID at that stage, or were you assigned?*

MYERS: I was assigned to NDU as AID's contribution to the faculty at what was then the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF)—now the Eisenhower School. I stayed there as the USAID Chair for three years until I reached 65, our retirement age limit. I then retired from AID and moved across the parking lot to the National War College to teach there for six years.

*Q: So, did— Was it your choice to go to the Industrial College at that stage? I mean in preference to another overseas assignment or whatever else you wanted to do with AID?*

MYERS: Well, we had been overseas for a long time. I had had three back-to-back overseas assignments and all of our kids had finished high school and were either in college or had graduated. Twelve years is a reasonable time out of Washington. NDU offered the chance to think about our work and how it fit into the broader scheme of things.

Teaching at NDU not only offered interesting work in a beautiful location with thoughtful students and faculty, but still allowed me to stay in touch with AID. During my time at ICAF, I went back to Russia twice, in 2008 for a month and 2009 for three months, to fill in as mission director. I also had a short stint in Kosovo, time in Burma and a chance to go to Afghanistan a couple times. And—

*Q: Also as acting mission director?*

MYERS: Not in Afghanistan: I went there twice to work on employee evaluations for a month and a third time with my class on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the War College. That class trip, looking at the coalition effort to strengthen Afghan security forces, was set up by Joe Collins, a faculty colleague who'd been Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stabilization. We spent eight days in helicopters and C-130s flying around the country to review training programs.

*Q: On these, just to go back for a second, to these, on these when you went back Moscow as acting mission director, did anything happen significantly in those two visits that either changed your mind about some things that you'd been doing earlier or which permitted you to carry out some things that you'd wanted to do before, or were these just basically filling-in opportunities?*

MYERS: Well, I was largely filling in. In 2009, I was there for Obama's visit and Lynn and Laura came as well. We thought we were on the edge of major breakthrough—it was the beginning of "reset." (Dmitry Anatolyevich) Medvedev was president of Russia. He was much more open, or so we thought.

There were signs of trouble, however, which we should have taken to heart. For example, when our site officer—Jonathan Kamin, then acting Deputy Mission Director-- visited

the meeting room where Obama was going to be meeting with Medvedev, he noticed the life-sized portrait of Stalin. He mentioned the picture and, ultimately, I think they replaced Stalin with Georgy (Konstantinovich) Zhukov, a general we could all like. More significantly, the government continued to hassle NGOs we were supporting, and Jonathan, quite accurately, worried about the Russians forcing us out of business altogether—which happened in 2012.

*Q: I see. Did you have much a role in preparing that visit?*

MYERS: Not much. The Presidents had established a bi-lateral commission with meeting groups on a number of issues, and I spent time trying to work USAID concerns into the discussions and final papers. More tangibly, I negotiated with the Orthodox Church on Michelle Obama's visit to a hospital which included multiple meetings with the priest in charge, vodka lunches, and a baptism into Russian orthodoxy. Mainly, I remember it's being a very exciting time and one, once again in retrospect, fraught with optimism and, unfortunately, unrealistic hopes.

*Q: And the Afghan trip, eight days of whirling around, helicopters, and so on. Did you learn much about that, that you could draw some conclusions from?*

MYERS: Well, I tried to. The valiant nature and good intentions of the effort, but the elusiveness of success. I was particularly impressed by the challenges of trying to turn illiterate villagers into disciplined security forces. It is difficult to teach real literacy to adults in a matter of weeks, and the nuance required to police communities effectively takes much longer. And we were using approaches and technology that were unsustainable—power points fed by computers requiring air conditioning and electricity—blackboards would have been more realistic. The trip confirmed thoughts I'd included in a short article in the Herald Trib (International Herald Tribune) written after my first visit to Kabul.

*Q: The essence of which was?*

MYERS: The essence was that in our foreign assistance, we were trying to do too much too fast, and that we needed to pull back and be prepared to go for the long haul. We needed to rethink civilian assistance. We couldn't put in as much money as fast as we were trying to do and expect to do it appropriately and leave anything remarkable behind. We were asking people to operate under absolutely impossible conditions and saddling them with unrealistic expectations.

Here you're trying to put in billions of dollars. You're doubling your staff. The mission couldn't even keep track of the people it had coming and going. And yet they were being asked to spend billions of dollars in a year, and then you're saddling them with inordinate reporting and impossible accountability requirements.

*Q: And they could hardly leave the embassy.*

MYERS: And, due to security concerns, they could hardly leave the embassy compound. And on that compound, you had five audit agencies looking over your shoulder, asking you questions. So you're spending a lot of your time just dealing with the inquiries. And you had thousands of visitors coming in. My three short trips to Afghanistan gave me a good picture of the impossibility of the task we were setting for ourselves.

*Q: So were you able to integrate that into what you did during these years you were an "academic"? I put that in quotation marks. I mean, it was a freedom to teach and to write. That is quite extraordinary for someone who has spent his career doing the on-the-ground work. So, tell me about that experience.*

MYERS: Oh, it was a remarkable opportunity. The schools, both ICAF and NWC operate largely with seminars, with classes of 13 students at NWC and 15 students ICAF.

*Q: And what did you teach?*

MYERS: Teaching is probably overstated. Professors there are actually called "facilitating seminar leaders," and our job is to lead discussion, pushing students to listen to differing perspectives and to challenge their assumptions. I led seminars at ICAF on national security strategy, which included everything from the nature of national power and interests to basic principles, the Founding Fathers, constitution, democracy and the formulation of strategy--the role of the public and Congress, key issues, determining strategy, and the tools, both military and non-military, for dealing with the challenges we face.

*Q: That's how you could sneak AID into the seminar.*

MYERS: Exactly. In addition to core classes on national security and global issues, we were also expected to develop electives. I led electives on aid, on Afghanistan and Pakistan, on Africa, on Burma. We drew up curriculum and taught regional studies courses to prepare students for spring trips of a week (NWC) to two (ICAF). At ICAF we focused our trips around key industry sectors relevant to national security. I worked on stabilization and reconstruction one year with a trip to South Africa and Mozambique and on agribusiness with travel to Vietnam and China. Both were sectors with policy issues that linked well to USAID's work. At NWC the trips were built around strategic national security issues relating to the country or region visited, and I developed courses and went with classes to Ukraine, Moldova, Afghanistan, Burma, and Ethiopia.

*Q: And was this a case where you were working hard to keep ahead of your class, if you had this diversity—I realize you're a man of many parts—but did you have to do a lot of reading?*

MYERS: I had to do a lot of reading. My ignorance on some of the subjects was vast, and there was no end to the reading that might be done in preparing for any of the seminars. Fortunately, we weren't expected to be experts on the core course, but they did hope that we would actually have real expertise on the electives. For the core courses, a course

director and assistants prepared the curriculum, including readings and pulled in appropriate outside speakers. We could make adjustments, adding material or cutting back, as we saw fit. We were supposed to be knowledgeable, but as “FSLs,” our role was to facilitate discussion, not teach a lecture course. For the electives and preparing for regional travel, we had greater responsibility. We developed the curriculum, selected speakers, and shaped the program.

*Q: This was even when you were during the first three years when you were on detail from AID?*

MYERS: Yes. The work during the detail at ICAF was pretty much the same at NWC, although the approaches at the two schools differed. At both our job was to facilitate the discussions, to raise questions and to push people think more deeply about their answers.

*Q: This level was—*

MYERS: Two thirds of them are military, uniformed military, drawn from the four services. One third are civilians, some from Department of Defense, some from CIA, AID, FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) other Homeland Security offices. We also had a couple international students in each seminar, usually at the general officer level, from foreign militaries.

Everybody in the schools has, on average, 20 years of experience in their agency or service. Most of the service people are colonels or near-colonels who are on the cusp of becoming colonels. Most State and AID people were FS 1s, on the threshold of assignments as DCM (deputy chief of mission) next or deputy mission or office director. Civilian agency people were usually at the threshold of senior executive service.

*Q: So, were these, by and large, a pretty impressive group?*

MYERS: Very impressive. Smart, high integrity, curious, engaged, hard working. Probably the best universe of students possible. Where else do you have students taught to follow orders? They are told to do their reading, and they do their reading!

And they’re intelligent, disciplined, and thoughtful. The hope is that the schools will provide a broadening experience, helping talented tactical thinkers gain skills for more strategic consideration of issues and solutions while giving them exposure to interagency colleagues and culture. When I first arrived, the faculty dean commented on the narrowness of military experience--military officers had not traveled, he said, as much as you would think. They traveled the world, but often end up confined to what resembles the Kansas army base.

*Q: And Vietnam.*

MYERS: Bases are bases. They haven’t had as broad an experience as they might. And the whole purpose of study at NDU is to bring all these national security people together,

give them an idea of what others, not just in the other services but other agencies as well, have gone through, their culture and thinking, so they can work more effectively together at a senior interagency level, with a broader understanding of critical issues and the tools available to deal with them.

*Q: Did you find that this was, personally, very stimulating and that you learned a lot from this kind of exposure over all these years? I mean, it's quite a long time to devote to this for somebody who was an operational person.*

MYERS: Well, I had been pretty operational except for my decade at IRRC. NDU gave me a chance to study and think more broadly and to try to see a bigger picture.

I learned a lot about the way the military operates and about interagency decision-making. I had much to learn. I hadn't spent much time in Washington, really, in my career. I realized how little I knew about a lot of things.

*Q: But you had an opportunity to do a lot of writing. You wrote a significant chapter in a book. Tell me about that.*

MYERS: Well, I did a chapter for the second edition of a book that a couple of faculty colleagues had put together called The National Security Enterprise, which pulled together chapters on key actors playing a role in national security: CIA and the intelligence community, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Homeland Security, OMB, Treasury, and State, as well as Congress, the media, lobbyists and think tanks. The first edition didn't have a chapter on AID, and in updating the book, the editors asked if I'd do one on AID. In writing it, I realized, once again, the complicated nature of our work, and how much I still needed to learn.

*Q: But the gist of that chapter, I mean, if you had to say the bottom line of that chapter about AID and security, what would you highlight?*

MYERS: Well again, you see my bias because, as you say, I'm operational. I emphasize the nature of USAID as a field-oriented agency, more interested—and more structurally capable—to design and implement programs than to influence national security policy. In the chapter, I say that USAID hasn't been a very persuasive player in the national security enterprise. Only on issues of humanitarian assistance or disaster response, where we have a predominant capability, do we have a substantial policy influence. We've been ambivalent about playing a more active role and limited by our own resources. We haven't staffed for Washington influence—few USAID people have been assigned to the NSC or to Hill internships—nor made policy a career path. We haven't been seen as a key policy player by other agencies. They may envy us for our resources, field experience and practical skills but not necessarily seek our policy advice on national security issues.

*Q: Have you seen a change, I mean, given that you're seeing people from these various agencies over how many—seven, eight—years you were doing this—nine years maybe—were the patterns of less understanding and then greater understanding?*

MYERS: Oh, I think there's been a growing understanding of the importance of USAID's work because so many of the military have and worked closely with AID people in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, they have a greater feel for AID and appreciation of its work.

*Q: A positive feel?*

MYERS: Generally very positive. They appreciate our work, but want us to do more. They—the military particularly, more than State colleagues—tend to underestimate the constraints on AID and overestimate our capacity. They think we could be doing more to make their work easier if we only wanted to or if we only structured our operations differently. They'd like us to go into conflict zones and put things back together again after they've done their work, to build a country's governance system, improve the economy, and create the institutions required for stability. There's not a universal understanding of just how long it takes to do development. The military services—and sometimes the general public as well—are accustomed to quick action and results, and they often need or expect something quicker than we can provide.

*Q: Yeah, that seems to get the fundamental cultural difference between the military and AID and the development side of—When I hear from people that the military wants results right away, AID says this is a long-term business, and did you come up in your efforts to try to understand both sides better, did you come up with any conclusions as to how to bridge that gap? I mean, we do have secretaries of defense fairly frequently now saying we have to support the State Department and AID.*

MYERS: They do, but then they don't give us chunks of their budget. I think it would take a dramatic shift in our national perspective. Historically, we've looked to the military as our default response to resolving national security threats. That's been true since World War II.

You can see it in the resources available for development versus defense. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and others will say, "Sure, I wish I could give some of my budget to State for diplomacy and USAID for development." When my students in a national security exercise at the end of the year were asked, "What would you do differently?" They answered, "Well, we would give 25 percent of the DOD budget to AID!"

*Q: Unfortunately, those people probably have all been forced out.*

MYERS: We can hope they get promoted. Theirs is a nice thought, but highly unlikely, given attitudes in Congress and the general public it represents. There may be many in the military who would devote, happily, much more money to diplomacy and development, but there's no political will to make it happen.

The lack of commitment is apparent in the budget, but also in the willingness to build

institutional capacity. Look at the difference in professionalization of the military compared to civilian agencies. I think that a third of the military people are in training or educational programs at any one time, all the time. They've got a large swing force to allow them to do that. AID doesn't have that capacity. We can't even get language training or area studies! We're not constantly trying to develop our staff. I have had military students who were getting their third master's degree. They'd only been in 20 years and had spent three of those years programs getting masters degrees.

USAID doesn't even offer long-term training anymore. We used to have mid-career training in technical areas as well broader management, at Stanford, Princeton and Johns Hopkins. Today, the only long-term training is the few slots at the war colleges.

*Q: That continues.*

MYERS: Yes. It's excellent and important, and USAID's participation at NDU and other war colleges—the Army War College at Carlisle or the Naval War College at Newport--has been expanding. But the opportunities for professional development are still limited. If we want to be able to have staff capable of dealing with particularly tough issues like stabilization in conflict areas, we need to consider dedicating time and resources to building their capacity. An Afghanistan/Pakistan program, for example, might commit people to working on the region for a 4-5 year period, but include language and area studies or long-term studies in crisis management built into the program as incentives.

*Q: So that theme in all our discussions have been about the importance of Participant Training, as far as the work we do with the countries that we're trying to support. But also the importance of training and maintaining the level of confidence of our own AID staff.*

MYERS: Yeah, I sometimes wonder whether we in USAID always saw ourselves as a temporary agency because we never invested in our own staff, Americans or FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) the way—

*Q: There was a time, well at least when there used to be the executive training program, send people off to universities for training.*

MYERS: Some short-term training.

*Q: For a year or so, I think.*

MYERS: For Americans, and there may have been long-term training for FSNs in the early years, the 60s and 70s, I think. Occasionally we've tried to include training, paid out of Mission operating expense budgets. But why shouldn't we be taking the best and brightest of our FSNs and sending them for masters and bringing them back, so that they can take the job that some American is doing. Only recently, have we developed a program to bring them back to Washington for two-three month fellowships, an excellent idea. Why not regularly bring them back to Washington for a one-two year tour, so that

they can really understand how we operate and then go back to replace direct-hire Americans? Part of our problem, long-term, will be the increasing cost—in part because of security concerns—of keeping an American overseas. It can cost as much as \$400-\$500,000. Well, we should be training FSNs who can fully replace Americans.

In Moscow, when we could see that we were heading for a downturn in numbers of employees, we set up an MBA (masters of business administration degree) training program for FSNs—

*Q: To bring over here? To bring them here?*

MYERS: No, to send them to school in Moscow. And we got one of the Moscow business schools, one which we had originally aided in its start-up phase, to give our students a cut on tuition, and then we paid half of it, and the students paid half. And over a two-year period about a dozen of our FSNs got MBAs.

*Q: Wow! Have they stayed with—*

MYERS: Well, because Putin closed the mission in 2012, a number of them are now living in Bethesda. They've become—are becoming—American citizens and working for American contractors. Not exactly the ending we expected, but investment in building capacity of staff is a good in itself, sometimes with unintended consequences.

*Q: Yeah. Well, so then how did, you know, your arrangements with the War College or National Defense University end just last year? And this was your choice? You reached some magic age?*

MYERS: I have reached a magic age, but actually, it was my choice. I could have stayed longer—they don't operate with an age limit.

*Q: (chuckles) It's like you got tenure.*

MYERS: Almost. They offered a three-year extension, but after nine years, it was time to try something different. I also thought that if I was going to ever do anything overseas again, I needed to get back in touch with people in USAID.

Teaching had been flexible enough to allow time for TDYs with USAID—to Afghanistan, Kosovo, and a remarkable four months in Burma in 2012 as interim mission director as we were re-establishing our program there.

*Q: Oh! Talk about that for a minute.*

MYERS: The trips to Afghanistan and Kosovo were to help out with annual evaluations, not something that everyone enjoys as much as I do. I've always welcomed the chance to talk to employees about their work over a year, see how it fits into a mission strategy, learn about how things look from inside a mission and help figure out how best to tell an

employee's story to the panels in Washington. The TDYs helped keep me up to date for teaching as well.

In terms of Burma in 2012, we could talk about that experience for a long time. It was a remarkable moment to be there. It was at the end of Burma's isolation and the beginning of what we hoped would be its transition to greater democracy and a more liberal economy. For years, the country had been stuck in time, isolated and inward looking. Rangoon looked as though it had been preserved in the past. It reminded me of Dacca when I went there in 1970.

*Q: The capital was still in Rangoon?*

MYERS: No, the official capital had actually moved to Naypyidaw in 2005, but Rangoon, or Yangon, is still by far the largest city and home to the embassies. It looked to me much like Dacca in the late '60s. It's a South Asian city with fabulous old imperial British buildings that had been left to ruin and empty government offices abandoned when the government moved to Naypyidaw.

*Q: So you opened the mission?*

MYERS: We had a small residual program in health and humanitarian assistance, largely left over from efforts to help after Nargis, the cyclone in 2008. Jessica Davies, an extraordinary manager, who had come to work on disaster assistance, was representing OTI and working with a PSC running the program. My mandate was to re-establish our relationship with the government, coordinate with other donors, assess needs and begin to frame a new program to aid in the transition.

*Q: There was, by that time, there was a U.S. ambassador, right?*

MYERS: Not yet. Not when I first got there in May of 2012. We had a chargé, Michael Thurston. Derek Mitchell, then the President's Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma, became the first Ambassador in late June 2012, midway through my four months, there.

*Q: And the Burmese government was interested in working with USAID?*

MYERS: The Burmese government was enthusiastic. It was a little like the Russians had been. They would say, "Tell us everything we need to know. What's been going on in the rest of the world for the last 20 years?"

*Q: Were these military people that you were dealing with or were they civilians?*

MYERS: Civilians, primarily, but some military too, particularly on the disaster assistance side. One of my early visits was to Naypyidaw, the new capital, to see the Ministry of Planning. My first meeting was with a deputy who had been on a USAID program years earlier. He asked if we could send some of his planning staff to a program

design course like the one he'd had at Arthur D. Little in Boston twenty years earlier. I was surprised to find USAID alumni as counterparts. Our discussion harked back to an era when we had a full-blown program.

*Q: And were you able to do, be responsive?*

MYERS: We actually were able to move remarkably quickly. We had a great deal of political support and an agency filled with people anxious to help. Again, as in the case with Indonesia after the fall of Suharto, Russia after the end of the Soviet Union, or East Timor at independence, it helped that we had lots of political attention. There was much excitement about Burma's transition. Everybody in Washington wanted to participate. They wanted to work in Burma, and many had resources, people, expertise, and money to offer.

Despite all the outside enthusiasm, it was a country that was still operating with bureaucracy left over from the days of the Raj, where red ribbons held files together and papers were stapled with straight pins, and it could take eight weeks to get a visa. This tempered the speed at which we could act, but it also gave me great independence. People would send ideas and offer resources, but they couldn't descend on the country, and I had time, without interference, to plan. The flow of visitors was manageable.

The needs were obvious. There was continued need for humanitarian assistance and help on health—malaria, HIV, and TB. The economy needed to be kick started. They needed help with the democratic transition and elections scheduled for 2015. The country was afflicted by continuing wars in the hills and, soon after my arrival, the flaring of conflict in Rakhine and the persecution of the Rohingya.

Within a week of my arrival, rioting in Sittwe led to a flood of Rohingya refugees. What had been simmering for years flared to full-scale crisis. Local Rakhine burned Rohingya houses and chased them from their villages. The government was unsure what to do and asked for international assistance. Within days, we were able to get help. Al Dwyer, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Representative in Bangkok, was able to fly in and join the General who headed Myanmar's Ministry of Border Affairs in Rakhine—the first American to travel with the Myanmar military in years, a sign of how quickly things were changing.

*Q: Was he able to do something?*

MYERS: We were able to put in money right away to help them get food and eventually shelter.

*Q: Disaster relief money.*

MYERS: Disaster relief money and food, initially a few hundred thousand dollars, but quite quickly rising to several million. We worked closely with other donors—the World Food Program (WFP) took the lead—to get the government focus on the crisis. It turned

out to be only the beginning of what has grown into an epic tragedy of human rights violations and humanitarian need.

In addition of humanitarian assistance, we explored the possibility of help to the peace process, to calm civil wars dating from the end of the Raj. There were only two think tanks in town. One was working on the peace process, and we tracked their efforts closely.

The second we engaged in joint assessment with Michigan State of agriculture development potential, and we joined with other donors to support local NGOs working on agriculture –from technology and training to research and marketing.

In other areas, we expanded work on health—malaria, HIV and TB, provided grants to support to university partnerships to spur education, and introduced NDI, IFES, and IRI to help on aspects of the democratic transition.

The experience with the democracy NGOs, was particularly encouraging. All were looking for ways to get involved in the transition from military rule to democracy. I took their representatives to Naypyidaw to meet with government officials. One of my favorite memories was the visit with Peter Erben, from IFES, to Naypyidaw, to meet with the Election Commissioner, a former general sporting a remarkable assortment of bejeweled rings on one hand. Peter started to give him a slide show on different electoral systems and how they might affect representation in parliament.

As the Commissioner got more and more interested, Peter moved gradually from one end of the table, so that as he closed his presentation, he was on the edge of the Commissioner’s chair, almost sitting in his lap. The Commissioner concluded by saying, “This is so interesting. I want you to come back tomorrow and give a briefing to the full commission.” So he did, beginning an on-going relationship for IFES with the Commission.

It was a tangible expression of interest and showed just how helpful USAID could be facilitating transfer of information and experience. Another example was a visit by Indonesian general, Agus Widjojo, and former Vice-Chairman of Indonesia’s parliament, at NDI’s invitation, to talk with Myanmar’s largely military government party about Indonesia’s experience in moving the military out of politics. IRI, IFES and NDI all were active in laying the groundwork for Myanmar’s successful elections in 2016.

*Q: And these things came on because you had a certain flexibility at the War College and your friends in AID knew that you were available and ready to go?*

MYERS: Yes. I just got a call. It was funny because our family had taken a Christmas trip to Burma in 2011.

*Q: Totally separate?*

MYERS: Totally separate. It was an excellent family trip—we all loved Burma, so when two days after getting back, I got an email from Courtney Chubb, the executive officer in Bangkok, who had worked with me in Moscow, asking, “Would you like to go to Burma for four months?” There was great family support for the idea.

*Q: Did they go with you?*

MYERS: Lynn came with me for part of the time, and we were able to catch up with our daughter Anna who was working on a reproductive health project in Laos.

*Q: Well if you look back now on all these years, and we covered a lot of territory in these discussions, are there any kind of final thoughts before you close up this particular phase of your oral history? Any closing thoughts?*

MYERS: Well, you’ve been very kind and patient to sit through it all.

*Q: But it’s been fascinating for me.*

MYERS: So much fun! My only regret is that I’m not 35 and able to do it all over again—go on and do a few more countries.

*Q: Well, you were a man of some age when you went to Burma, so why shouldn’t you be able to? How old are you now?*

MYERS: 71. Well, I think we’re likely to be going through a period of some institutional uncertainty for the next couple of years. So it’s hard to know.

I would love to see a national commitment to long-term development and a lead agency to coordinate it. I’d like to see development concerns represented at the cabinet level, because I think we need someone with the ability to offer a development perspective who could negotiate with Treasury (U.S. Department of the Treasury) and Commerce (U.S. Department of Commerce) and State on issues with real developmental impact. There is a strong argument to be made for development assistance as part of a foreign policy strategy in our national interest.

But, unfortunately, I just don’t see the political support. More likely, development work and the people and programs carrying it out will be part of State Department or scattered across the interagency. Having aid more closely tied to State would not be the end of the world. In some areas, particularly Africa, it may make the most sense—our overriding national interest in these countries may be economic and political development and logically, our Ambassadors there should come out of a development background. A number of think tanks are already working on suggestions for the Trump administration. Much debate remains to be done. Raj (former USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah) tried valiantly to make a fresh argument for AID as a convener and partnership organization and a laboratory for new technologies and approaches.

He was right to recognize that development work has changed dramatically from when we first started. There weren't the NGOs and the private sector involved in these countries with the capacity to do development work. Now, there are so many other players out there. We may not need as quite as large an agency on the ground—new information and communications technology has changed that. But we need still capacity, local employees and people with long-term area and language expertise, who can understand the context, identify the opportunities, build the relationships and do the convening which is most appropriate.

Our field missions and foreign service staff, both American and host country, continue to represent unique assets that can be used to support not only USAID programs but the programs of other government agencies—State, CDC and HHS, EPA, USDA and the US forest service-- as well. We can be a platform for support and coordination.

We will continue to have huge challenges in our work in conflict zones, in fragile states, on stabilization and transition, as we deal with risk and security issues. We will require flexibility in management and accountability, and greater strategic patience. Work on building institutions, systems, and perhaps, most importantly, competent and moral leadership to confront the challenges—corruption, environmental change, cross-border issues of crime and infectious disease, poverty and inequality—requires long-term vision, commitment and persistence. At times, in our past, such work has been seen as a critical to our national interest, representative of our values, important to our security. Let's hope that it will be seen that way again in the future.

*Q: Well, I sure hope that what you just said, somehow or other, reaches the ears of people who actually can make decisions.*

*But I thank you for doing all this. Thank you for all the years you spent doing such interesting and important work.*

*And we look forward to people drawing upon your oral history once you, not only get the transcript—get through it—but I think you'll find that you've touched on some really very important and substantial issues. So thank you for that!*

MYERS: Thank you. It's been a real privilege.

*Q: It is now 12:50 on, again, February 1, and we are calling an end to this most interesting oral history for Terry Myers. Thank you, sir.*

MYERS: Thank you!

## GLOSSARY

AA: Assistant Administrator, USAID

AFS: American Field Service  
 AmCham: American Chamber of Commerce  
 BAPPENAS: National /development Planning Agency—Indonesia  
 BRAC: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee  
 BRI: Bank Rakyat Indonesia  
 BULOG: Indonesian Bureau of Logistics  
 CDC: Centers for Disease Control  
 CFP: Center for Fiscal Policy (Russia)  
 CRSP: Collaborative Research Support Program  
 GGAP: Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest  
 CGIAR: Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research  
 CRL: Cholera Research Laboratory now the International Center for Diarrheal Disease  
 Research  
 DAS: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State  
 DCM: Deputy Chief of Mission  
 DIFD: Department for International Development (British AID)  
 DRL: State Department Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor  
 FSL: Facilitating Seminar Leader  
 F SVC: Financial Services Volunteer Corps  
 HHS: Department of Health and Human Services  
 HIID: Harvard Institute for International Development  
 HUAC: House Un-American Activities Committee  
 HUD: Department of Housing and Urban Development  
 IBRA: International Bank Restructuring Agency  
 ICA: International Cooperation Administration  
 IFC: International Finance Corporation  
 IFES: International Foundation for Electoral Systems  
 IG: Inspector General  
 IRI: International Republican Institute  
 IQC: Indefinite Quantity Contract  
 MCC: Millennium Challenge Corporation  
 NCBA/CLUSA: National Cooperative Business Association/Cooperative League USA  
 NDI: National Democratic Institute  
 NGO: non-governmental organization  
 NIS: Newly Independent States  
 OMB: Office of Management and Budget  
 OTI: Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID)  
 PCV: Peace Corps Volunteer  
 PSC: Personal Services Contractor  
 RHUDO: Regional Housing and Urban Development Office (USAID)  
 SAIS: Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies  
 SBY: Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono  
 SEATO: South East Asia Treaty Organization  
 SNCC: Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee  
 SRI: Stanford Research Institute  
 UP: Uttar Pradesh

USINDO: US-Indonesia Society

*End of interview*